

LORD GOPINATH



Brevity His Beauty

B. KAK

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(Brevity His Beauty)

by
B. L. Kak

Jagat Guru Bhagavaan Gopinathji
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**To the memory of my little daughter
ANJANA**

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CONTENTS

Introduction	I - II
Foreword	III - IV
I. Saint and Snake	1 - 11
II. Winds of Change	12 - 23
III. Sun, Moon and ...	24 - 31
IV. Anti-war Actions	32 - 43
V. Kama and Karma	44 - 51
VI. Balance is Beautiful	52 - 59
VII. Pilgrimage for Peace	60 - 66
VIII. Dependable crisis Man	67 - 73
IX. Soul and Source	74 - 78

INTRODUCTION

Urge to search. Urge to hunt. Urge to collect. Urge to seek information. Urge to compile. Urge to learn. Urge to earn. In plain language, urge in me to write on Kashmir's 'Saint of Saints', Lord Gopinath, was triggered by two persons, S D Rohmetra, owner and Editor-in-Chief of Daily Excelsior, a leading English newspaper from Jammu and Kashmir, and Pran Nath Kaul, Chief Patron of the Delhi-based Jagat Guru Bhagavaan Gopinathji Charitable, Cultural and Research Foundation.

S D Rohmetra became a source of inspiration when he used in his publication my articles, one after another, on Lord Gopinath. Pran Nath Kaul's role was different altogether. He kept himself in constant touch with me for months together. His one-point: I must produce a book on Lord Gopinath.

The 9-chapter book titled 'Lord Gopinath: Brevity His Beauty' does contain lot of details on political, social and religious events, primarily to establish the fact that Lord Gopinath got himself actively connected with the people and problems of his homeland, Kashmir.

The book is replete with many an untold story on the 'Saint of Saints'.

A book may be defined as a written, or printed, message of considerable length, meant for public circulation and recorded on materials that are light yet durable enough to afford comparatively easy portability. I know much has been written about Lord Gopinath. Yet quite a few things of public interest remained to be brought to the fore.

It was, precisely, in this context that I carried out a study before I undertook the difficult task of preparing the book on Lord Gopinath. Here it is.

B L KAK

FOREWORD

“By your grace I am liberated in this very body. I cling to you in my heart, you are the remover of six types of distresses. I bow to you great master, Lord Gopinath”. We recite regularly these lines from the poem read by Prof. M.L. Kukiloo, the scholar of Kashmir Shavism at a symposium in New Delhi.

Lord Gopinath has been an epitome of love. Love is realisation of faith. It is the bond of harmony and happiness, a world of blessings and bliss. Love, like Sunlight, is that energy-flow whose warmth can be experienced in an all illumined freedom. God seeks love in us, as love can never be had by command.

It is love which made Mr. B.L. Kak, the daring and dedicated journalist, to cover the presence of Lord Gopinath at Tiger Hills, 16,000-feet-high, during the Kargil war of July 1999 and guiding our brave soldiers in capturing this all-important hill feature. As well said by Mr. Trilokinath Dhar ‘Kundan’, erudite scholar-writer in his book ‘The Saint Extraordinary, Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji’ that a lot has been written about Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji, a lot more is still unknown about him and yet to be written.

Hence, the need of the present book, ‘Lord Gopinath: Brevity His Beauty’ by Mr. B.L. Kak. It is the labour of Love for the author and unknown facts for the admirers of Lord Gopinath.

Mr. B.L. Kak, known for his in-depth investigative reporting, has brought a positive balance forward from his previous births. In this book, the author has lot of study work to his credit. He has brought lot of details on political and social unrest in which Lord Gopinath himself got actively connected for the betterment and peace of his homeland, on his own.

The book is full of untold events which were not in print form so far. Jagat Guru Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji Research Foundation feel indebted to Mr. B.L. Kak for undertaking this important task and preserving the details of historical significance for posterity.

We have to understand that we all are interdependent, linked with each other. The propagation of the message of 'Sadguru' has the sanction of our scriptures. As the book is considered a vehicle of enlightenment, the present preparation of Mr. B.L. Kak deserves all accolade from the Foundation, disciples, devotees, admirers and general populace.

The present book is an attempt to offer one more humble tribute to Lord Gopinath to enable devotees to have spiritual upliftment, moral advancement and service of the fellow people. Bringing the mind under control is not, and cannot be, a one-day affair or exercise. It takes time to cultivate the habit.

Mr. B.L. Kak, in his study, has consolation to a modest 'sada' who can control 'kama' and anger just before death to be counted as integrated and happy person. In order to control the mind from wandering one can take up simple spiritual practices like meditation, reading the works of great saints and listening to soothing music.

I believe that Guru Maharaj works through me and so my ego is not concerned with the result. It is his look out. Lord Gopinath considered love as the soft and yielding principle in nature. It is never too late to introspect and experience rejuvenation.

With His love all problems will automatically melt and vanish.

Pran Nath Koul



Lord Gopinathji looks at me



CHAPTER - I

SAINT AND SNAKE

Years before 1968. Each year was of considerable importance for the socio-religious and socio-political events and happenings in Kashmir. Muslim-dominated province in the extreme north of India, Kashmir is bounded on the north by China, on the east by Tibet and on the south by Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Pakistan. Each town and village has had the presence of some mystics and saints, Muslim and Hindu.

Kashmiri Mohammedan or Hindu mendicants—widely known as *fakirs*—did not lose their respective followers or admirers even when the people of Kashmir were, by a vicious combination of circumstances at the time of India's Independence, involved in a dispute between India and Pakistan. It was not for the first time in the history that the Kashmiris stood at crossroads.

Apart from many changes from time to time, the Kashmiris witnessed two great cultural and political revolutions in bygone ages: First, in the third century B.C. when Buddhism ousted Vedic Brahminism and established a casteless society. The second revolution occurred in fourteenth century A. D. when Hindu polity lost progressive potentialities and was fatally struck down by Islam. How did our forefathers react to the challenges? They welcomed new creeds but refused to be swept off their feet and get overwhelmed by them.

Whatever was progressive, truthful and positive in the new faiths they did not hesitate to own; they chose the path of eclecticism and evolved philosophies—Trika Shastra on the former occasion and Rishi cult on the latter—to preserve and enrich their own culture. In this way they had gradually, through the centuries, built a national character and peculiar individuality of their own which they were jealous to preserve in sunny as well as in rainy days. The lesson of history, therefore, is that a Kashmiri is tolerant, willing to

imbibe fresh ideas and truths, ready to compromise but never prepared to abandon cherished principles, lose identity or yield before physical force or injustice.

Religious Humanism propounded by hermitess Lal Ded and saint Nund Reshi, and taught and practiced by their followers known as Rishis or Babas, has been the precious heritage of all classes and communities in the Kashmir Valley whether they profess Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or any other religion. This notwithstanding, cracks appeared in the relationship of Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus during the 1952-1967 period. The tone and tenor for the operation against the continuance of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State was, in fact, set by the Kashmiri leader himself, as part of his scheme to regain popularity among the Muslim masses.

With the Sheikh's dismissal and subsequent detention, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was foisted on the State as the new Premier. Both the Sheikh and the Bakshi had injected new—in certain cases, quite unhealthy—elements into the socio-political and socio-religious environment to suit their respective needs and requirements. "*Thadiya, karu tayare kursi travnitch*", said a Srinagar-based Kashmiri Pandit saint in mid-August 1952, about a month after the controversial Delhi Agreement was finalized on July 14 that year. The saint's reference was to Sheikh Abdullah. "*Thadiya*", in Kashmiri language, means a tall man; "*Karu tayare kursi travnitch*" (get ready to relinquish power). The Sheikh was the tallest among the Kashmiri politicians.

The saint, Gopinath Bhan, who was found informal when the Sheikh's successor, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, called on him, on more than one occasion, without any fanfare, to seek his blessings. But the saint appeared totally different one evening in August 1963. After the Bakshi's brief stay in the saint's room, it was not difficult to read the message in the one-line sentence slowly uttered by Gopinath: "*Ba yehkasna kiheen karhit, amisind doh gai poora*" (I cannot do anything, his days are numbered). The Bakshi

was accompanied by his trusted Kashmiri Hindu, Satlal, who had earned the sobriquet "Sat sitar". Satlal's known weakness when he was alive: To play sitar, a Hindu plucked-string instrument with a long neck.

Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Srinagar, capital city of Kashmir, in June 1963. He wanted a change in Kashmir; he had changed his opinion about Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Nehru's altered attitude towards the Bakshi had become evident in August 1962, when public attention in New Delhi as also in Jammu and Kashmir came to be focused on a statement by the Bakshi regarding "some burning issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir". And as Nehru was not in favour of staging the type of coup d'état which threw Sheikh Abdullah out of power in 1953, he employed the method of embarrassing the Bakshi and encouraging the political group, headed by Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq.

The statement quoted Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed having emphasized that Kashmir was still "very much an international issue." The statement embarrassed New Delhi. If the Bakshi had to answer some awkward questions during his visit to Delhi in the beginning of September 1962, he was himself to blame. The statement came as a surprise, if not a shock, to those who were long accustomed to hearing him talk of Kashmir's irrevocable link with India and of Sheikh Abdullah having been finished as a political force in the State. The Bakshi, who lacked courage to ignore Nehru's anger and resentment over his statement, did issue some minor clarifications to the report but in the situation that time the corrections carried little conviction with the public inasmuch as they were issued 17 days after the original interview.

"Sat sitar", after his meeting with the Bakshi, knocked at the door of saint Gopinath, once again. The former's plea was for the saint's intervention in support of the Bakshi. But the saint's message was loud and clear: "*Guch, cha vun punnis sahebas ki paapi chuna zeyada kalus zinda rozaan* (Go, you tell your master that a

sinner does not last long)". Nehru wanted some controversial leaders on the Indian scene, including Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, to give up high offices and work for nursing the ruling party (Congress) in the country back to health. When the Congress party adopted the Kamaraj Plan the progressive group in Kashmir's National Conference, headed by Sadiq, got overjoyed to learn that the Bakshi had, in a spirit of bravado, declared to step down.

Nehru was not unhappy. Indeed, he encouraged the Bakshi to do so. The Bakshi's apple-cart was upset soon after his resignation was accepted by Nehru. While high office of Congress President had come seeking Kamaraj, in Kashmir, Sadiq who went in search of it was frustrated. The Premiership of Kashmir had eluded him. Just when success seemed within his grasp his opponents, led by the Bakshi, pulled the rug from under his feet in what he regarded as treacherous manner. The Bakshi succeeded in getting a government of his own proteges reconstituted in J&K with Shamsuddin as Prime Minister.

November 1963. After his unscheduled visit to the famous temple atop Hari Parbat in Srinagar one evening during the last week of November, saint Gopinath wore a serious expression. Displaying the swift act of smoking his chillum, the saint briefly addressed a small group of his followers, majority of them professing Hinduism, on the "growing importance of caution and utmost restraint, with harsh winds about to blow across the region". Last month of the year was hardly on its way out when a precarious situation shook the Kashmir Valley to its depths. The situation arose after the disappearance of Prophet Mohammed's holy hair from the Hazratbal shrine on the outskirts of Srinagar. The Hari Parbat temple is not far from the Hazratbal shrine.

The disappearance of the sacred relic was reported in the early hours on December 27, 1963. It was at last recovered from an undisclosed place on January 4, 1964. The authorities were taken aback when a section of the Kashmiri Muslims demanded identification of the relic. The situation was quite explosive.

"Chottakak ye jahazus manz, wutta wutta karnavi sarnee". These words came from saint Gopinath. His reference was to Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was Minister without portfolio in the Nehru government. Because of his diminutive size, Shastri was described as "Chottakak" by saint Gopinath. Shastri did flew in from Delhi to resolve the crisis. People in general and authorities in particular heaved a sigh of relief on February 3 when Shastri settled the question of identification of the relic at a ceremony in Srinagar.

Saint Gopinath may not have reached all over India like Sai Baba or all over the globe like jet-age Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi. But Gopinath was acknowledged as spiritually more robust and miracle-wise more stunning. During his lifetime the presence of a number of Godmen had, of course, become a reality. But saint Gopinath knew the ropes and rose high in the coterie of local Godmen. He was so high in the estimation of his devotees that they started calling him "Bhagavaan", The God. Never before in the chequered history of Kashmir has a mortal been elevated so high. He only spoke very briefly— one-line sentences more often than not. Indeed, brevity was his beauty. All the more reason for me to have the compilation of facts titled as 'Lord Gopinath: Brevity His Beauty'.

Emotion excited by what surpassed expectation or experience: Lord (Bhagavaan) Gopinath appeared to have taken a bath only twice during the last 30 years of his life. First at the Khirbhawani shrine in Ganderbal sector of Kashmir, and, second time he took a bath was in his last residential abode at Chandpora in Srinagar during the harsh winter of 1962-63. This finding is contained in SN Fotedar's book titled 'Jagadguru: Bhagavaan Gopinathji'.

Even as Fotedar's association with him lasted more than 20-years, nothing has been mentioned as to why Lord Gopinath took a bath only twice during the last three decades of his life—that is, between 1938 and 1968. Lord Gopinath was nearly 70 when he breathed his last on May 28, 1968. What his biographer (SN

Fotedar) chose to emphasize was that even though the 'Jagadguru' (Teacher of the Universe) did not take a bath, his skin gave out an aroma.

In fact, the biographical study has, for reasons best known to Fotedar, avoided bringing to the fore the factors responsible for the unwillingness or inability of Lord Gopinath to take a regular bath even during summer months. After the great ordeal he underwent during the 1930-37 period, Lord Gopinath obviously did not want to expose a part of the treasure he had acquired: Power to have snakes and handle them in accordance with his wishes.

His secret, constant association with snakes also confirmed his "direct contact" with the snake-God, Shiva. During the meditation in the 7-year crucial period of his life, Lord Gopinath also established the fact that he was Lord Shiva's "Pupil". At the end of the 7-year-long *tapasya*, Lord Gopinath chose to have one or two snakes around his waist, under his long, loose gown, called 'pheran' in Kashmiri. The unnatural phenomenon was part of his spiritual accomplishments.

Obviously, he did not want his new companion (snake) to get exposed. Hence, his unwillingness to take a bath. Fotedar's book does contain an instance vis-a-vis Lord Gopinath's power to produce a snake as per the requirements at a particular point of time. Fotedar has quoted Vish Nath, an old man in the employ of Ganesh Asthapan, Srinagar, as saying that on the day following Diwali in 1960 he called on Lord Gopinath in the afternoon when he found many people at his residential premises. "A young man from among them picked up a lump of hashish lying in front of Bhagavaanji while the latter was busy smoking his chillum, and hid it in his pheran pocket. After Bhagavaanji had finished smoking, he asked the young man to keep the hashish tied in a handkerchief. There upon the young man noticed that the pocket in which he had placed the hashish had become heavy. He also sensed something moving in it. After he had put a hand into the pocket, he started

shrieking, 'A snake, a snake, I am dying, I am dying. Save me'. And a black snake, about 3 feet long, came out of the pocket, and all those present in the room, including Bhagavaanji's sister, bolted...."

Clearly, and with definite purpose and philosophy, Lord Gopinath killed two birds with one stone. In the first place, he imparted a lesson on honesty and integrity of mind. Second, he demonstrated his supremacy over the awe-inspiring creature like a poisonous snake. The snake, which came out of the culprit's pheran pocket, crawled on to Lord Gopinath's lap and stayed there for a while. He was found patting it on its back with his right hand and then asked it to go away. According to Fotedar's book, the snake obeyed his master (Lord Gopinath) and crawled into one of the folds of his asana and was never seen again.

Those who had, over the years, come closer to him had found him with a "full vision" of the past, the present and the future. Curiously, however, their master had kept them in the dark about his belief in astrology. Lord Gopinath could not be blamed, considering the fact that the supremely great mind of Francis Bacon found room for a belief in astrology. Kepler, one of the founders of modern astronomy, avows that a study of the facts has "instructed and compelled my unwilling belief" in the inexplicable relationship of planetary aspects and conjunctions with human affairs.

Lord Gopinath was a great spiritualist. But he always avoided holding discussions on spiritualism. In connection with the whole volume of research that goes by the name of spiritualism, it is as certain as the occasional appearance of comets in the sky, that spiritual seances sometimes—very often—attended by invisible beings who are actually the departed souls of people who once lived in the body. Persons who deny that are ignorant as they are silly.

They are ignorant of the fact that scores—hundreds, indeed— or highly-cultured people bear testimony to their experience in that matter, and they are silly in supposing that their trumpery

little prepossessions as to what is probable and what is improbable are to be set against the positive evidence with those prepossessions. Also they are marvelously silly in supposing that because they may go to some spiritualistic seance and see reason to think the proceedings are imposture, therefore proceedings at all other seances must be imposture too. There are forged bank-notes in the world, no doubt, but that does not militate against the fact that there are also others which are genuine.

On the other hand, while the rank disbelievers in spiritualism are foolish to an exasperating degree, the devotees of that pursuit are grievously unscientific in their methods, as a rule. They are on the threshold of a mighty science, but they too often think themselves in possession of advanced knowledge. Spiritualism has certainly shown, what indeed could have been ascertained in other ways, that the human soul survives the death of the body.

But it has not explained the destinies of the human soul after death, because people who pass away only learn about these by degrees, and while they are in a position to communicate with friends still in flesh, they have rarely gone very far on their ultimate journey, and have not acquired any knowledge concerning its later stages.

Lord Gopinath was clairvoyant. The term 'clairvoyance', in this case, means, of course, no more than clear seeing—seeing, that is to say, with the eye of the mind, in some mysterious fashion, which has nothing to do with optics, but, nevertheless, is a bonafide perception of actual things. Clairvoyance is a faculty as old as the world. A humble analogy may be derived from the position of the man (Lord Gopinath) on a ladder looking over a maze in which holiday-makers are wandering about and trying to find their way.

In the midst of the twists and obstacles they cannot tell at any given moment whether they are pursuing a path that will enable them to get out, or running up a cul-de-sac. But the man on the ladder can see quite plainly. He can see the obstacle or clean path,

as the case may be, which is veiled from their sight. Therefore, he can foretell whether they will go on or very soon be turned back.

The Kashmir situation witnessed yet another change after the installation of Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq as the State's Premier in place of Shamsuddin, towards the end of February 1964. The policy of liberalization, introduced by the Sadiq Government, set new forces working in Jammu and Kashmir. With the unconditional release of Sheikh Abdullah and his associates on April 8, 1964, and with the withdrawal of the cases including the Kashmir Conspiracy case, the situation underwent a big change: the liberalization policy encouraged the moribund democracy to revive on the one band, and, on the other hand, provided an opportunity to anti-India and pro-Pakistan sections to come into open and start new platforms to popularise their views.

The Plebiscite Front was revitalized to press the demand for grant of self-determination right to the Kashmiris. While the Jamaat-e-Islami experienced little difficulty in spreading its network throughout the Muslim-majority Kashmir, the formation of Awami Action Committee (AAC), and rise of militant youths and students on the political scene created moments of despair among the ruling politicians. In other words, the Sadiq Government had an uneasy time, more often than not, in the course of its retaliatory measures against secessionists.

Sheikh Abdullah visited Pakistan on May 25 and 26. He was accompanied by some of his colleagues from Kashmir. In Pakistan, the Kashmir leader had talks with President Ayub Khan. Abdullah had just begun the tour of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) on May 27 when he learnt that Jawaharlal Nehru had passed away. He had to cut short his visit to return to India.

"Bata gav pannini vatee. Batne hi akhrus hissab. Vot-vot karwun thudd akhrus nami batne nish". Lord Gopinath did utter these words. But he declined to elaborate. English translation of these words runs thus: "Pandit is dead and gone. Ultimately, female

Pandit (batne) will settle the score. Jumpy tall man (thudd) will ultimately yield to the female Pandit". The word "bata" was about Nehru, who hailed from a Kashmiri Pandit family, while the word "batne" was about his daughter, Indira Gandhi.

After Lal Bahadur Shastri took over as Prime Minister of India, anti-India sentiment in Kashmir received a fresh impetus in the wake of formation of a unit of the Indian National Congress (INC) in J&K, change of nomenclature of Sadr-i-Riyasat and Prime Minister and extension of the scope of Article 356 and 357 of the Constitution of India to Jammu and Kashmir. Followers of Sheikh Abdullah observed January 15, 1965 as the 'protest day' against the extension of these Articles to Kashmir. And the call given by the agitated Kashmiri leader to his followers for 'social boycott' against the workers and sympathizers of the State unit of the Indian National Congress led to the violence and clashes on several occasions. Lord Gopinath's Chandpora locality, too, witnessed violent clashes.

Anger against the Indian leadership mounted in the Kashmir Valley soon after Sheikh Abdullah was taken into custody on his arrival at Delhi's Palam airport, shortly before dawn on May 8, 1965. The Kashmir leader, who was to have taken a boat to India on May 8 after completing his pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, arrived at Palam unexpectedly by air from Bierut instead. Waiting police officers took him away before he was imprisoned.

Days after the development, Lord Gopinath, while smoking his chillum, was heard by a State Government employee, Brij Nath, as saying: "*Bata hekan na chatti nish bachit* (Kashmiri Pandits cannot escape difficult times ahead). It took time for the saying to become a reality. The secular character of the Kashmir Congress party got exposed. The echoes pushed up by the shrill, well-drilled crescendo of the Kashmiri Pandit agitation in Kashmir in August 1967 brought to light some significant factors. The Pandit agitation was vigorously launched to scuttle the marriage of a Pandit girl with a Muslim boy of Srinagar.

And under the cover of the heat generated by the agitation, the Pandits pressed for the removal of their grievances against the State Government. Five Hindus were killed and a large number of others injured with the outbreak of hostilities between the agitators and the police on the one hand and between the Pandits and a section of the local Muslims on the other hand. The crisis produced by the agitation exposed hollowness of the Kashmir Congress and its usefulness as a secular force. The Kashmir police, mostly manned by Muslims, had for about two decades frequently hunt for Muslim agitators and face the approbrium of their coreligionists. The tables had turned during the Pandit agitation. While a section of the Kashmir police acted much against the wishes of the Pandit community, the fears of the Muslims expressed by them in the past were confirmed by the Pandits who, on more than one occasion in the course of the agitation, banked on the partisan support of the Indian police.

Withdrawal of the agitation was followed by the appointment of the Gajendragadkar commission in November 1967 to make an assessment of the development programmes apportioned to the various regions of the State, and to recommend measures to give assurance that available resources were being shared equally. The Gajendragadkar commission was also asked to examine the official policies regarding employment and admission to institutions of higher education. The appointment of the commission was welcomed by all sections of the people, except, curiously, the Kashmiri Pandits who had sought it most. Their position was understandable inasmuch as, constituting hardly two per cent of the population, they were already manning about 27 per cent of the State's higher services. It was no wonder that even Kashmir Muslims had hailed the appointment of the commission as they had felt that they trailed behind even the Pandits. Many of the latter wondered later whether the agitation they organized had not done them more harm than good.





Ice Lingam in Amarnath Cave where Lord Gopinathji visited

CHAPTER - II

WINDS OF CHANGE

The message was loaded with pro-communal amity accent: "*Batta chaa akh, Musalmaan beyakh?*" This conveyed volumes at a time when differences, albeit minor, between the two major communities in Kashmir—that is, Hindus and Muslims—had become too evident to be missed. "Batta" meant Kashmiri Hindu—Pandit, to be precise. "Musalmaan" meant Muslims. No wonder, Lord Gopinath's emphasis, those days, on the question: Is Hindu one, Muslim another?

Islam was born in the seventh century as a liberating and unifying force which brought hope and freedom to millions of human beings living wretched lives in many countries. Within a century of its birth some decaying societies and several warring countries accepted the new faith to become peaceful and progressive. The message of Islam, however, reached India in the 12th century through Turkish conquerors at a time when the new faith had shed much of its revolutionary character and had been transformed into a weapon by corrupt monarchs and military adventurers for fulfillment of their personal ambitions.

Therefore, while on the one hand the liberation essence of the Islamic philosophy remained concealed from the eyes of the Indians, on the other, the cruelty, vandalism and intolerance of the conquerors became synonymous with Islam. A hostility in the minds of the Hindus towards Muslims in general was generated which has not only persisted but also grows in intensity through the centuries. Though most of the Indian Muslim are descendants of Hindu converts and belong to the same race, the two religious communities have not been able to forget the past, reconcile to the common fate and became one.

The flag of Islam was planted on the banks of the Sindhu and Ganga not by the Arab heroes but by Persians demoralised by

luxury and barbarians of Central Asia who had embraced Islam when Ashaera doctrines governed the Muslim life. Even in this degenerated form the new faith brought relief to the Indian masses. E. B. Havel, a lover of Aryan culture whom no one can accuse of being partial to the Muslims, says: "The effect of the Mussalman political creed upon Hindu social life was twofold: it increased the rigour of caste system and aroused a revolt against it. The alluring prospect which it held out to the lower strata of Hindu society was as tempting as it was to the Bedouins of the desert and the nomads of Central Asia who could enjoy to the full the pleasure of city life but had not the industry and ability to build cities for themselves. Islam made the Sudra a freeman and *potentially a lord* of Brahmin. Like the Renaissance of Europe it stirred up the intellectual water (in India), produced many strong men and some men of striking originality and genius". E. B. Havel authored 'The History of Aryan Rule in India'.

The alien Muslim masters looked down upon the Hindus as unclean infidels and cowards. Idolatrous practices, obsequious manners and debasing customs of the Hindus were disliked by the Muslims. In their turn, the Hindus considered the Muslims to be usurpers and uncivilized foreigners, malechhas, who had no right to rule over the holy land of Bharta Varsha. Throughout the entire period of the Muslim rule, the Hindus, disunited and demoralised as they were, did not refrain from making efforts here and there to overthrow it.

By and large, the Turkish conquerors of India acted against the revolutionary, liberal and accommodating spirit of Islam. They were under the influence of the revolutionary Ashaera School and had complete faith in its preachings and practices. As such they proved to be fanatical and cruel towards the conquered Indians. Pilage and plunder became the watchword of most of them; demolition of Hindu temples and destruction of Hindus sacred literature, architecture and sculpture engaged their attention.

The hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims did not remain confined to power politics; it embraced all aspects of

social life; it assumed the complexion of a psychosis. In the 18th century the Muslim rule was ousted by British Imperialism reducing both the communities to the state of slaves. This should have impelled the Hindus and the Muslims to make a common cause against the new rulers for the achievement of freedom. But the traditional antagonism underwent little change. Indeed, it became more bitter and acuter; it was reflected in their respective attitudes towards the alien masters.

The movement for the achievement of democratic freedom was greatly affected by the polarization of communal views. The emotions born of past historical events and the traditions inherited from older generations are a source of clash and conflict. The two communities can still derive inspiration from their respective past but in this they have to be selective for the past of either community is not wholly conducive to growth of secular nationalism. We shall have to learn from our nationalist ancestors, both Hindu and Muslim, whose philosophies and teachings are surprisingly similar and, therefore, their espousal alone can lead to unity.

It was, apparently, in this context that Lord Gopinath chose two different occasions to bring to the fore a teaching and a warning—teaching the need and relevance of amity and brotherhood between the Muslims and Hindus; warning after violent Muslim demonstrators, aided and abetted by pro-Pakistan patriots, not far from his Chandpora house in Srinagar, chanted slogans like “Hindustan (India) murdabad”, “Pakisthan zindabad”, “*Battau bagair, battneu saan asi gachi Pakistan* (we want Pakistan with Kashmiri Pandit womenfolk, not with male Pandit population)”. These demonstrators did inject unhealthy element into the situation in the wake of retaliatory action against the Hindu demonstrators vehemently protesting the marriage of a Pandit girl with a Muslim boy of Rainawari in east of Srinagar.

A day later, after the sundown, a functionary of the Jammu and Kashmir Police Department, Abdul Majid Lone, visited Lord Gopinath’s residential premises, after his inspection of the minor

damage caused to the Sheetalnath temple in the locality. Majid Lone, a typical Kashmiri villager, was known for this "weakness" for elevated saints and fakirs in the region. He held Lord Gopinath in high esteem. Hence, his quiet, periodic trips to his Chandpora house. That the 'superman' (Lord Gopinath) knew the new assignment of Majid Lone (Pakistan desk in the J&K CID) was borne out by the former's brief message or warning: "*Pakistan keyazi? Pakistan kare yimun dakistan.* (Why Pakistan? Pakistan will ruin them)".

I have had personal equation with Majid Lone. During one of my meetings in his office, which was then located close to the famous Emporium complex in Srinagar, on the banks of the river Jhelum, Lone apprised me of his meeting with what he called 'Great Man': "*Cha kath sonchus goakh, yem hilawanai cheti* (What are you thinking about, these undesirables will rattle you, too)". Correct it proved; during the height of militancy, aided and abetted by Pakistan, in Kashmir Valley, Srinagar included, Lone was gunned down by terrorists.

All this, many years after the Pandit agitation of 1967, though. Naked fact, however, remained—the fact that Lord Gopinath saw with the eye of the mind, in some mysterious fashion. And the fact none did contest or refute: Gopinath Bhan, who became "Bhagavaanji" years before he breathed his last, was born off the conjugal explosion of the two spiritual sparks—Narayan Joo Bhan and Hara Mali. Narayan Joo, the father, was a man sold out to the idea of God. However, he understood that spiritualism was no substitute for a square meal and, hence, did business in pashmina wool. And like every good Kashmiri Brahmin, his spiritual pursuits did not prevent him from marrying and raising children.

Narayan Joo Bhan married Hara Mali, who her father had proclaimed was the incarnation of Goddess Ragyina—the deity who relishes milk. Thus, the two formed the two spiritual sparks. Their newborn (Gopinath) was the second of three brothers and two

sisters. Lord Gopinath's arrival on the earth: July 3 1898, in his ancestral house at Banamohala, in the heart of Srinagar.

His biographer, SN Fotedar, says that Gopinath Bhan was not averse to studies and passed middle. He lost his mother at the tender age of 12. He started earning his bread and butter at the age of 16 as a compositor. But born free, he shook off the shackles of subordination and opened a grocery shop. He carried on for 10 years. But then gave up. He churned the gist out of scriptures and showed special preferences for Gita and Vedas.

Most of the time he remained within than without. He had shown great interest in Sanskrit, and would recite from memory many a catchy Sanskrit verses in an impressive manner. In his early life, he had recited, without any aid, verses from Bhavani Sahsranaam, Indraakshi, Panchastavi and Shivastotraavali. A copy of Gita lay in front of him when he breathed his last. During the last 30 years of his life, nobody saw him reading the Gita and other Hindu scriptures. He seemed to have memorized all these in his early life.

Nothing can be said or written with certainty as to who could really have been Lord Gopinath's guru. Several Kashmiri saints, including his father, Narayan Joo Bhan, Swami Balak Joo Kaw, Swami Aftab Joo Wangnu and Swami Zanakak Tufchi, had come into contact with Gopinathji. But there is no evidence to show that he accepted any one of them as his guru. If the 'superman' was found, on more than one occasion, clearing or washing utensils at the place of Swami Zanakak Tufchi, it did not mean that the latter was former's 'Guru'.

AN Dhar, a researcher considered Swami Zanakak Tufchi as Gopinathji's 'Guru'. Dhar based his finding on the supremacy of the Swami on what he himself termed as "personal enquiries" made by him from the eldest niece of Swami Akalal. In fact, AN Dhar let it be known: "I have learnt for sure in unambiguous words

that her uncle, Akalalji, and Bhagawaanji (Gopinath) had been disciples of Swami Zanakakji”.

In the early 1980s, I used to pay obeisance to Sona Bub (a Muslim fakir living at Vesu on the Khannabal-Qazigund road in the Anantnag district of Kashmir Valley) once a week. And Sona Bub made me wash utensils in his house a couple of times. This did not, and will not, prove in any way my wife's comment describing Sona Bub as my 'Guru'. AN Dhar's "personal enquiries" become debatable, in view of the statement of Lord Gopinath's biographer, SN Fotedar. The statement runs thus: Some of Swami Zanakak Tufchi's disciples alive today stated that Bhagawaanji was not among the known disciples of Swami Zanakak.

Lexicographers may have linguistic pet hates or loves but to them no word is ever totally unimportant. It is, precisely, in this context that the word 'topi' has been included in Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary. 'Topi'? The answer provided by the Chambers dictionary: A hat, pith-helmet, worn especially in India. This dictionary has long been remarkable for the extent and breadth of its coverage of the language.

But the lexicographers did not anticipate—and they had no provocation or reason to anticipate—a different definition of the word 'topi' in the case of Indian mystics and spiritualists. And one such mystic, who, according to his followers attained direct intercourse with God in elevated religious feeling or ecstasy, was none other than Lord Gopinath. In Hindu religious parlance, a 'Guru' offers a 'topi', albeit mysteriously, to his disciple. Then, whose 'topi' did Lord Gopinath wear?

A few years before Lord Gopinath's end came, a devotee had the courage to find out from him the name of his real 'Guru'. And the unidentified devotee, too, was left high and dry, after Lord Gopinath simply pointed towards a copy of the Gita lying before him and proclaimed: "Any one of the 700 shlokas can be one's

guru". How many of us know about his deep study of scriptures, particularly the one relating to the 'Super-God, Shiva'?

My study—I shall be the last person to term it as research—has led me to believe that Lord Gopinath was a disciple of Lord Shiva himself, even as he started worshipping Shakti at an impressionable age. Shiva-Shakti upaasana or worship is known to have been practised in Kashmir from time immemorial. No wonder, the man under reference had attained direct intercourse with Lord Shiva.

Any doubt in this regard was set at rest by Lord Gopinath himself during 1924-25 when he designed on a sheet of paper two 'Om' symbols in Shardsa script. All the space around and within these two symbols was filled with the pious words, 'Ram' and 'Shiv'. Ayodhya's Ram, history bears testimony to the fact, worshipped Lord Shiva. And Lord Gopinath's worship of Shakti should leave no one in doubt about his contact with Lord Shiva, who, according to Hindu mythology, loved and liked to be in constant touch with Shakti. Hence, Shiva-Shakti combine. And, hence, a clear indication of Shiva-Gopinath link-up.

Prof. JN Sharma, a passionate devotee of Lord Gopinath, did place himself on record, saying: "Bhagavaanji started with the spiritual discipline known as Panchaanga-upaasana, that is, meditating on the five deities—Lord Ganesh, Lord Surya, Naraayana, Lord Shiva and Shakti. Later, his ideal was the Divine Mother, Shaarika, whose vision he had, for the first time, at the age of twenty-seven". There is no denying, if one were to take into account Hindu mythology, that the Divine Mother, Shaarika, as referred to by Prof. Sharma, is Lord Shiva's Shakti.

Mythology does contain clear references vis-à-vis Shiva's weakness for a particular type of intoxicant or chillum smoking. Obviously, adopting "like-father-like-son" choice of operations, Lord Gopinath clearly indicated, from time to time, that he liked

and loved Lord Shiva's two things, namely, chillum smoking and keeping a dhooni (sacred fire) burning before him and offering oblations into it off and on. It will not be incorrect to say that Lord Gopinath wore Lord Shiva's 'topi'.

Again, how many of us know the kind of mantras or verses from Hindu scriptures Lord Gopinath silently and surely recited while offering oblations into the dhooni burning in front of him? He prefaced his prayers, every day, by making Lord Ganesh as the number one in his list. Lord Ganesh was followed by Lord Vishno, Lord Kirshna, Lord Ram and Mahadev (Lord Shiva). It took me quite some time before I was able to locate Lord Gopinath's emphasis on a set of verses, he obviously wanted his co-religionists to remember and recite.

These verses:

(1) To Lord Ganesh:

Shuklamberdheram Vishnum Shashi-Vernam
Chaturbhujem Presanvednam Dyiay Servignop-Shantiay.
Abhipretarth Sidyerthem Poojito Yah Sureirapi,
Sarvvignchdeay Tasmaiy Ganadipatiya Namah.

(2) To Lord Vishno:

Shantakaram Bhujegshaynam Padmnabham Suresham
Vishwadharam Gagansadresham Meghvarnam Shubangam
Lakshmikantam Kamalnaynam Yogibirdyangameyem
Vande Vishnum Bhawbhayeharam Sarwlokaity knatham.

(I am bowing before that Lord Vishno who has calm disposition, is sitting on Lord of snakes (Sheshnaga), who has a lotus in his center of belly, who is lord of devtas, who is cause of this universe, who is present everywhere like sky, whose colour is that of a cloud, whose all parts are beautiful, who is husband of Lakshmi, whose eyes are like lotus, whom yogis meet through meditation, who destroys fright of life and death, one who is Lord of every one).

(3) To Goddess Durga:

Durgay Smrita Harsi Bhetim Ashayshjanto Svsthaiyh
Smrita Matim Ateev Shubham Dadhasi Daridray-
Dukhbhay-Harini Ka Tvtanay Sarvopkar-Karnya Dyadr-
chita.

(Mother Goddess Durga, by meditating on you, fright goes out of the mind and by remembering you with healthy mind, clear and clean wisdom gets generated. Mother, remover of poverty, fright and troubles, who is else than you, who is ready for helping the needy).

(4) To Lord Krishna:

Dheyam Sada Paribhvgnam-Abheshtdoham Tirthaspadam
Shiv-Vrinchi-Nutam Sharneyam
Bhretyaritham Prnatpaal Bhavabdhi-Potam
Vanday-Mahapurush! Tey Charnar-Bindam

(I bow before the eternal feet of Lord Krishna that are worth concentrating upon as a result of which all the troubles and miseries go away, who is giver of all comforts and things, who is embodiment of all pilgrimages before whom even Lord Shankar and Lord Brahma do bow, who is protector and destroyer of pains of his devotees and a great helper in crossing over this ocean of one's life).

Gyanalayam Shrutivimregyem-Anadim-Archyam
Brhmadibhir-Hredi-Vichinteyam-Agadh-Bodhiayh
Sansar-Koop-Patito-Tarnaav-Lambam
Vanday Mahapurush! Tey Charnar Bindam.

(O, Eternal Lord Krishna, I salute before your feet, Lord Brahma remembers you in his mind, you are present in all Vedas. You are home of realization and knowledge, you are worthy of being worshipped, being protector of all those helpless who are thrown on the thorns of life).

Mukam Karote Vaachalam Pangum Langyetay Gerem
Yat kripa Tamaham Vanday Parmanand-Madhavam.

(I offer my handfold namaskar to Vishno the consort of Mother Lakshmi incarnated in Lord Krishna, with whose blessings a dumb gets back his energy to speak and lame with power of crossing a mountain).

(5) To Lord Shiva: -

Antak! Mam Prati Maa Drasham-Aynam, Krodh-Karal-
Tamam Viddhehe
Shankar-Sayvan-Chintan-Dhero, Bheeshan-Bhiayrav-
Shakti-Mayosme.

(O, angel of death, do not look towards me with angry and frightening eyes as I am always absorbed in the worship of Lord Shiva. I have become a centre of Shiv energy through meditation, devotion and remembrance of Shiva. Thus your terrifying and frightening looks can do no harm to me).

Prodet-Satya-Vibodh-Mareche-Prokshet

Vishwa-Padarth-Sattvah

Bhav-Paramrat-Nerbhar-Poornay, Tvyeaham-Atmani
Narvratim-Aymi.

(O, Shankar, it is through your existence revealed to me by real knowledge about you that makes me realize that all attachments and all that exists get activated by awakening of this realization. I start sharing eternal bliss in my mind saturated by immortal devotion).

(6) To Lord Ram:

Sansar-Saram Nigam-Pracharam, Dharamavtaram

Hratbhoomi-Bharam

Sadavikaram Sukhsindhu-Saram

Shri Ram Chandram Sataram-Namami.

(Propagator of wordly behaviour, the Prophet of righteousness or Dharma, the reliever of sins on the earth, retainer of everlasting grace and tranquility, to that Ram I am offering this prayer from the core of my heart).

Lord Gopinath's greater emphasis was on these verses, establishing the fact that he was Lord Shiva's pupil:

Prantosmi Mahadev, Prapanosmi Sadashiv,
Nivaray Mahamratium Mratinjaya Namostutay

(O, Mahadev, I salute to you. Sadha Shiv I have come to surrender unto you. Please remove my horrifying trouble of death. O, controller of angel of death, I offer my salutions to you).

Traymbkam Yajamahey Sugandhim Pushti-Vardhanam
Urva-Rukam-Ev-Bandhnat Mratyor-Mukshey-Mamratat.

(One who has three eyes, sun, fire and moon, to that tri-named Shankar whose fragrance is spread in each and every tiny part and who creates this universe, sustains and destroys it, before that Shankar, my only prayer is that I do not want him to make me live for over. But he should kindly do only this favour to me that my breath should get separated from my body at the time of death without any trouble as the fruit separates from its shell as it ripens, as in case of walnut).

If the Hindu mythology or written material on the behavioural system of Lord Shiva were to be believed, this third God of the Hindu triad is a person of extremes—intolerant of bad deeds and an ocean of compassion. And those who studied Lord Gopinath for years together when he was alive, have confirmed that he, too, was a person of extremes—intolerant of bad deeds and an ocean of compassion.

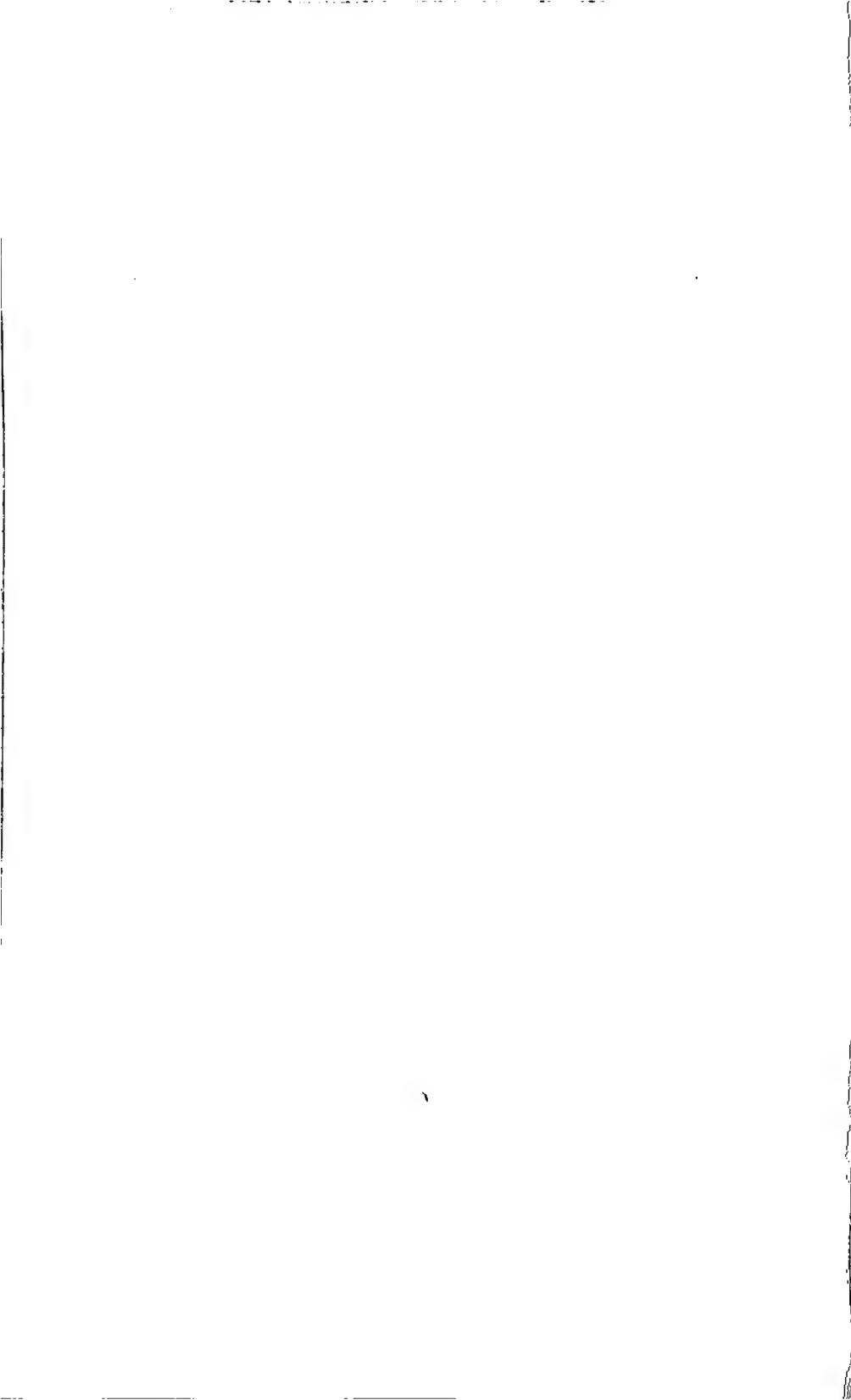
Lord Gopinath did advise his dear students to raise the consciousness to the centre of the forehead and hold it there, consciously. The head is kether, the Crown of Creation, and the centre of the highest consciousness possible. The lesser centers and chakras, situated below the eyes, belong to the unconscious realm, and the true mystic (Lord Gopinath) did not go in at these lower centers. That part of the body which is situated below the eyes is in the field of nature and is automatic in function, to supply the needs of the body by attraction or repulsion to the great outer realm of nature's energy fields. The psychic realm is in the subconscious field.

The spiritual realms are situated above the eyes, the actual centre of consciousness in the body. That is the abode of the soul in the body, and is referred to as the heart center by the saints. Lord Gopinath always resisted the temptation of holding group discussions. But he did not avoid sending out significant signals like "we are here to learn to control the energies through a body of resistance, in conscious actions and reactions". What is really meant is the overcoming of the deadly vices of lust, anger, greed, attachment and egotism.

These are tools of the lower mind and desire body. They can be sublimated only by the practice of "chastity", "forgiveness", "charity", "detachment" and "humility", under the guidance of a true mystic or master. The mystic (Lord Gopinath) was ever in devotion and contemplation of the "Source" and "Origin" of all energy and beings. He did his work with his hands and feet, but his soul, heart and mind were in devotion to the beloved God who was his "All". He thus followed the "North Star" of all currents of directional energy, flowing inward and upward, back to the "Source" whence they came as centrifugal energy of creativeness.



Lord Gopinathji worshipped Goddess Jawala at Khrew



CHAPTER - III

SUN, MOON AND...

Sun. It is, we know, the heavenly body that the earth travels round and receives light and warmth from. Moon. It is satellite revolving round earth in lunar month and reflecting light from sun. Hence the greatest—indeed, immeasurable—importance and need of Sun and Moon for all species and creatures on the earth. And if Kashmir's renowned Hindu saint, widely known and acknowledged as "Bhagavaanji", had, in his lifetime, made it a point to worship, without any fanfare, the two planets, it was not without meaning, not without purpose.

In his act of worship there was, of course, a clear message: God as static energy is cosmos (Brahman) and dynamic energy as nature (prakriti)—shining in the heavens as Sun; the light of eternal truth and reflecting the beauty, serenity and radiance of the Moon as cosmic love. The wonder of wonders is that in origin man personifies the 'Lord' of the day and woman, the 'queen' of the night.

Lord Gopinath, through his peculiar idioms and expressions, would his devotees as well as visitors realize and accept that truth is life and life in truth is love of God. The union of the two is that of purush (pure consciousness) and prakriti (nature) and the cause of all creation. Many of the ailing and depressed and frustrated or unemployed visitors to the house of Lord Gopinath invariably received the message: We come into the world at a time which is suitable not to us but to cosmic conditions; in other words, we are born when the planets occupy certain positions in the heavens. Our function is to do their bidding unquestioningly; for they rule us throughout our lives. Neither our bodies nor minds, neither our emotions and desires nor our reasoning and thinking faculties, are free from the influence of the planets.

While biology asserts that a child's physical and mental form is determined by the interaction of heredity and environment,

astrology affirms that it is determined by the planetary influences which it receives at the moment of its birth. The child's physical appearance, mental traits, and external circumstances are all determined by its horoscope. Once again, while biology maintains that after its birth, the child can acquire no new characteristics but can unfold only those, which are latent in its person, astrology too asserts that the planetary vibrations which the child receives after its birth will act in no other way but in conformity with the powerful influences it received at the time of its birth.

Goethe's sage observation to man is:

"As on the day which lent thee to the world,
The sun received the greeting of the planets,
And thou must needs in strength and stature grow,

According to the law that gave thee being.
So must thou be, naught other canst thou do,

The Sibyls and Prophets have decreed it;
For time and Force are powerless to break,
The form here stamped, which life doth but develop".

Lord Gopinath, like the astrologist, maintained that each individual from the time of his birth carried his fate in his own person. The future potentialities—active and passive—of the individual, his friends and foes, his joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains, health and sickness, knowledge and ignorance, fortune and fatality, good and evil traits of character, are all stamped at the moment of his birth in his unconscious psychoplasm or subconscious self by the planets and the zodiacal signs. The future of a human being is not only predetermined and preordained by the starry heavens, but it can be accurately prognosticated from his astrological chart, drawn in accordance with his birth-time, by noticing the cosmic influences of the zodiacal and planetary vibrations which he receives at the moment of his birth and which inexorably determine his fate in the world.

The position of the Sun in his birth chart shows his heredity; that of the Moon, his environment. There is, therefore, no difference whatever between the statements and claims of the physical scientists—the biologist, and of the occult scientist—the astrologist. At the same time, Lord Gopinath did not challenge the standpoint of freethinker. While a vast majority of the physical scientists have not a shadow of doubt in their minds that a child's life is influenced by its heredity as well as its environment, they have absolutely no faith in the belief that it is influenced by the planets and the constellations of stars which are hundreds of millions of miles away from the earth. The claims of occult and prophetic sciences, which are aptly termed pseudo-sciences, like astrology, palmistry, phrenology, clairvoyance, cartomancy and numerology are brushed aside as of no consequence by the physical scientists, because the evidence in their support is not enough.

After worshipping Sun and Moon, Lord Gopinath was heard chanting "Jai Shani Devta" while offering oblations into the dhooni. Shani is Saturn. As per mythology, Saturn knew that his son would be the ruler of the world. He used to devour his children. But then a titanic God like him had to obey the universal law of fate, for when his son, Jupiter was born his wife gave him a piece of stone wrapped in cloth, and he devoured the whole blessed thing.

Saturn depressed his father, Uranus, of the government of the world, and was in his turn dethroned by Jupiter. He is a foe to savagery, immorality and barbarism, and he is, according to mythological accounts, the God of civilization, agriculture, and social order. The bird of Saturn is goose. Saturn, astronomers have already established, is 886 millions of miles from the Sun and its diameter is 73,000 miles. It has rings round it, and this is the most remarkable peculiarity. It is attended of 10 satellites. To the naked eye Saturn appears to be distinctly of a yellowish colour.

And the average astrologer has established that Saturn is a cold, dry, barren planet. Saturn is wise but slow, and causes delay in all things. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" may truly be said of this slow-moving, plodding planet. It is called the 'Greater

Infortune' and brings troubles from the house wherein it is posited at birth. If Lord Shiva, as per mythology, did not under-estimate mercurial Saturn, how could his (Shiva's) pupil, Lord Gopinath, be expected to look sideways.

Lord Gopinath's right palm possessed two most significant signs, namely, the line of intuition and the Ring of Solomon. The Ring of Solomon was one of the strange marks of mysticism and occultism, but in this latter case, owing probably to the qualities signified by the Mount of Jupiter, its possessor (Lord Gopinath) aimed at having the power of a master or an adept in such subjects. The line of intuition denoted clairvoyance of the highest order, clear vivid dreams which often came to pass, intuition as to how things would be done and very often manifested itself in inspired speaking and writing of the loftiest character.

It will not be out context to reproduce here certain findings, each of them thought-provoking, of Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet, Director of the Aeon Centre of Cosmology in South India. Patrizia says in her book titled 'Kashmir and the CONVERGENCE OF TIME, SPACE, and DESTINY', (dedicated to Jagat Guru Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji) while referring to Lord Gopinath's homage to Saturn, that it was not unusual.

Finding number one: "A yogi, a sage, a seer, does not need to be conscious of the reasons why certain acts must be performed. He/she only knows, through an inner divine Command that this must be done. Being the perfectly realized souls that they are, and such pure instruments, they carry out those commands unfailingly. And finally, many years later we may come to know that their actions were meaningful and indeed crucial in a process that was at the time in its infant stage but that nonetheless required their participation for a future fulfillment".

Saturn is indeed a central element in the cosmological story Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet pieces together in her book with a view particularly to informing the Kashmiri Pandit community of their own part in this grand mosaic. Why is Capricorn so important for

India? Her finding in this regard: "Perhaps Bhagavaan's (Lord Gopinath's) worship of Saturn can help us understand. For it is known to astrologers throughout the world that Saturn rules Capricorn; and further it is accepted by all that Capricorn is the planetary ruler of India. That Bhagavaan Gopinath paid homage every day to this planet should therefore not surprise us, since this planet is central to India's destiny. From ancient times Saturn has been equated with Chronos, the Time-Spirit. This is Siva in his form of Mahakala".

Finding number three: "Given the critical state of affairs, particularly where Kashmir is concerned, and above all the condition of the Pandit community, there is little time left for speculative discourse... why this community, above all others, has had to bear the heavy burden of exile and humiliation for decades, and that this situation is not only understandable but inevitable. On the other hand, there is also hope amidst these difficult circumstances because Saturn like Durga, is not only exacting and ruthless in the fulfilment of its divine purpose; it is a planet that offers protection at the same time. The day will soon come when this protection will be made manifest".

If the Ring of Solomon was one of the strange marks of mysticism and occultism, the pronounced Mount of Jupiter had made Lord Gopinath love and like music, too. Jagannath Shivpuri, well-known musician and singer of Kashmir, has made irrefutable statement vis-à-vis Lord Gopinath's "special ear" for Shastriya sangeet. Shivpuri's statement forms part of the book titled 'Bhagavaan Gopinath: Our Spiritual Heritage'. Edited by Prof. AN Dhar and Prof. Neerja Mattoo, the book is largely a collection of the papers, clearly indicating the many ways in which Lord Gopinath influenced and motivated, spiritually, the devotees and admirers from different disciplines.

Jagannath Shivpuri has prefaced his write-up with a pointed reference to Lord Krishna's description of the Sam-Veda. That should, Shivpuri avers, explain the vital connection seen between music and spirituality. He is of the view that devotional music,

conforming the Shastriya sangeet can be helpful to the aspirant in his saadhana. Indeed, he has cited many instances in support of his finding about Lord Gopinath's love for music.

One night, in the living room of Lord Gopinath, Shivpuri sang his own song 'Ram Nam Baj Re Mana' in the raag kedar. And as the musical session progressed, Shivpuri changed to fast rhythm while singing 'Raj Rajeshwari Mata Bhavani'. Within a few minutes, Lord Gopinath snatched the 'taanpura' from Shivpuri and after making a sign to him to continue singing, started playing on the stringed instrument with the four fingers of the right hand. Lord Gopinath, also known as the "Saint of Saints", handled the 'taanpura' for about 10 minutes.

Spirituality and music have come, developed and matured together since the beginning of time and it is not possible to think of the one without the other or to separate the one from the other. This conclusion has been drawn by Kashmir's well-known musician, Prof. Rageshwari Mattoo. She is right when she says that among the many attributes that man has been endowed with is his inborn sense of rhyme, rhythm, cadence and beat. Her poetic expression: "He perhaps first perceived these in nature, such as the crash and the roll of thunder, the sound and cadence of falling rain, the roar of mountain torrents, the surf at the seashore and the murmur of running water in placid streams".

Hence, yet another conclusion drawn by Prof. Rageshwari: Thus, alongside his research into spirituality also began his research into what many millennia later came to be recognised as music and the performing arts. Initially, man perhaps used his sense of rhythm and beat to express his emotions, such as the display of joy at success in his search for food, his sustenance or sorrow over loss of any kind. As language evolved in the progress of man, rhyme and cadence blended with rhythm and beat, and music was thus born.

Prof. Mattoo's conclusion number three: In man's pursuit of spiritual knowledge leading to the realization of the divine cosmic

force which he named God, his genius and creative urge made him devise language, and so move on to compile hymns and songs in praise of God and the deities, which he articulated through his sense of rhyme, cadence, rhythm and beat, having got refined and honed in the process of his evolution.

The four Vedas, namely the Rig Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Atharwa Veda and the Sam-Veda deal with different aspects of human conduct. Of these four, the Sam-Veda is exclusively devoted to fine and performing arts, mainly music, both vocal and instrumental, and dance. Prof. Rageshwri Mattoo's conclusion number four: Music and dance forms were initially devoted solely to spiritual and devotional themes in praise of God and the deities, extolling their greatness and their virtues and feats. In the process of its evolution, music was codified into Raagas, which in turn were bound in the scale 'Sa-Re-Ga-Ma-Pa Dha-Nee' denoting the basic sound range.

Conclusion number five: To cope with the need for maintaining and imparting rhyme, rhythm, symphony, harmony and the myriad requirements of the Raagas, a whole range of percussion, reed, string, bells and cymbals and other instruments evolved over the centuries to advance and embellish the quality of music. When the Sam-Veda was brought into being this music came to be recognised as shashtriya sangeet, later also known as 'classical music' as opposed to the folk music of the various regions of India.

Phillip Simpfendorfer, and Australian researcher, who was regarded as a passionate devotee of Lord Gopinath, also conducted an in-depth study of Kashmir's cultural and spiritual heritage. He threw up a new 'remedy' for Lord Gopinath's co-religionists—Kashmiri Pandits. The 'remedy' is: Every Kashmiri Pandit family in exile should possess two things—a map of 'sacred' Kashmir and a picture of 'saint of saints', Bhagavaan Gopinath.

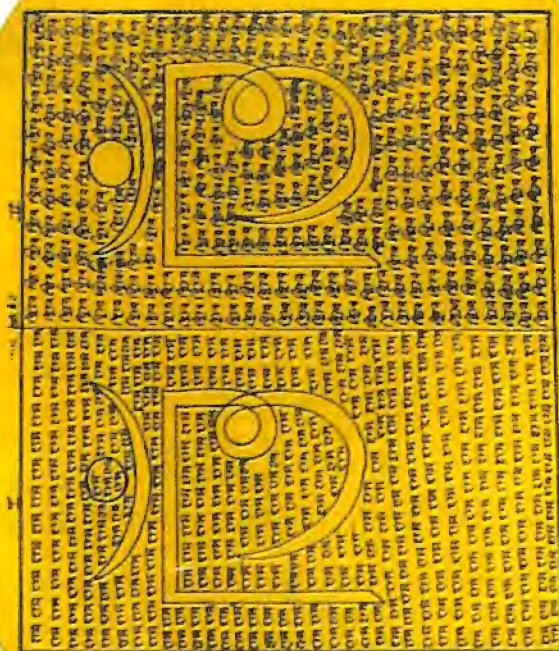
Simpfendorfer, in his none-too-old write-up, while making a pointed reference to the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from the

Valley in the beginning of 1990, observed: "Because of your exile, I feel that I too am exiled from Kashmir. But I am not exiled from Bhagavaanji.... In Hindu terms, Gopinath is a Bhagavaan. In more secular Western terms he is a guide of humanity. It should be possible for the Kashmir heritage and Bhagavaanji to be appreciated in terms of any religion".

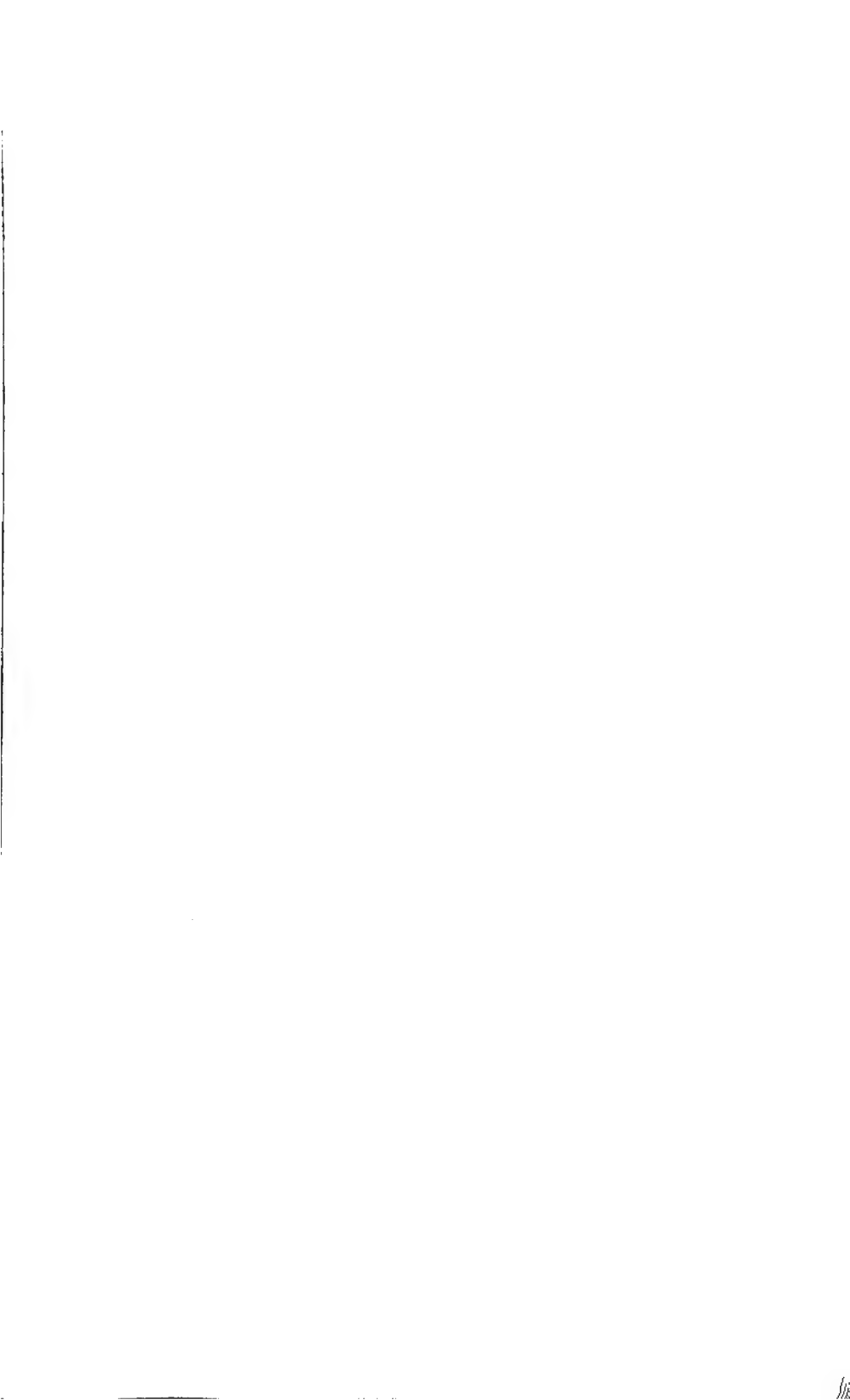
"Whatever the degree of an individual Kashmiri's faith, the fact remains that the life of most Kashmiri is dominated by the presence of a saint somewhere at the back of his or her mind, whose aid is invoked whenever the uncertainties of life threaten". This finding has come from Prof. AN Dhar and Prof. Neerja Mattoo.

Many indeed are the people who support yet another finding of Prof. Dhar and Prof. Mattoo: "Every spot associated with the presence of a rishi or a non-materialistically oriented person, is a place of revere, a shrine to which people flock. This is what has happened, very conspicuously indeed, in the case of Bhagavaan Gopinath and his legacy". And his followers are not to blame for the way they created a space not confined to where he lived on earth in his physical form, but wherever they happen to meet to carry on the good work.

That the Government of India had no option but to recognize Lord Gopinath's spiritual stature as a saint became too evident to be missed when, not long ago, the Minsitry of Communications issued a commemorative postal stamp on him. And by the time the important event had taken place in New Delhi, it had also been accepted that his fame had spread to countries abroad. Prof. Dhar and Prof. Neerja Mattoo had this to say: "This is appropriate for a person who, even though he was physically located in a house at Srinagar, was believed to be everywhere in the world at once, in a perpetual state of bliss, and part of the cosmic consciousness-one among the Jagad Gurus".



Lord Gopinathji's emphasis on "OM"



CHAPTER - IV

ANTI-WAR ACTIONS

Soldier. Saint. Spiritualist. Three different forms they are, they were, and they will be. Yet, there is one aspect, or requirement, which keeps them in a state of preparedness, literally. It is 'sacrifice' each one of them is required—indeed, bound—to offer.

The spirit of and urge for sacrifice for a noble cause was real than apparent in case of renowned fakirs and spiritualists in the mountain-girt Valley of Kashmir, with Lord Gopinath on the top of the list. Being the son of the soil, Lord Gopinath obviously was eager for the protection and preservation of what he occasionally described as 'Maij Kashir' (Mother Kashmir).

Considering the fact that people by and large, particularly the devotees of Lord Gopinath, have accepted SN Fotedar's book titled 'Jagadguru Bhagavaan Gopinathji' portraying his life, there is no option but to believe the findings in relation to the contribution of Lord Gopinath during the two wars between India and Pakistan on the soil of Jammu and Kashmir, first in 1947-48 and second in 1965. Numerous, indeed, are instances in support of the fact that great saints generally shun publicity and do not want to be judged by the miracles they perform.

Lord Gopinath proved that he himself was not in the category of those saints and spiritualists who generally avoided making use of the eight supernatural powers, called ashtasiddhis in Sanskrit. Reason: As Lord Gopinath had attained Shivahood, he had nothing to lose or gain by performing miracles. His great quality: He had, beyond doubt, great compassion for the suffering humanity and would go out of his way to help people in distress.

No wonder, his biographer, SN Fotedar, wants us to believe that Lord Gopinath played a magnificent part against Pakistan-sponsored tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947. "By his

very nature, he could not remain indifferent when the country was in trouble", says Fotedar in his book. And Lord Gopinath, he insists, "put in a great spiritual effort from 1947 onwards, unmindful of the physical hardships he had to endure in the process, to bring order out of chaos".

Every passion gives a particular cast to the countenance, and is apt to discover itself in some feature or the other. As the partition of India was, at last, allowed to take place on the basis of religion in mid-August 1947, the two independent countries which succeeded British raj in India began to function in relation to each other with a plethora of problems and compulsions inherited by them from the past. In the most eventful year of 1947, the people of Kashmir and in the rest of the Indian subcontinent witnessed and felt the impact of a series of developments. After the entire subcontinent, excepting Jammu and Kashmir States, was partitioned into Hindu majority and Muslim majority areas. Kashmir's premier political party, National Conference, opposed joining the new Muslim country, Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Sing desired to have his homeland independent of the two Dominions, India and Pakistan.

An early evidence of the Maharaja's wishes, as influenced by the then Prime Minister, RC Kak, was the address he delivered at a Special Darbar in the middle of July 1946. The Maharaja said: "The second principle which guides our policy is that so far as our domestic affairs are concerned we must work out our own destiny without dictation from any quarter which is not an integral part of the State". Lord Gopinath was found against Maharaja Hari Singh, and in favour of his son, Karan singh.

In the end of July 1947, as the communal passions were rising in India, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru met in Delhi to discuss the possibility of resolving the political deadlock in Kashmir. Gandhi, who arrived in Kashmir on August 1, was received by the National Conference and other organizations; the Muslim Conference demonstrated against his visit. Gandhi met

RC Kak on August 2 and 3; the former had session with the Maharaja also. After India's partition, Pakistan and its supporters in Kashmir displayed their desire and eagerness for the territory's merger with that Dominion. Reports of armed infiltration from Pakistan began to circulate in Kashmir from the beginning of September 1947.

As the month of October progressed, events took a turn for the worse in the wake of march into Kashmir by armed Pakistani tribesmen. If SN Fotedar were to be believed, Lord Gopinath had, two months before the Pakistani raid, told a devotee posted at Baramulla that he should get to Srinagar everything from Baramulla, even a blade of grass, as he had purchased those articles with his honest earnings. "By Bhagavaanji's grace, the devotee was transferred before the raid", announced the book that is: 'Jagadguru Bhagawaan Gopinathji'.

After Uri fell on October 24, the raiders reached Baramulla on October 27. Baramulla is just 32 miles from Srinagar. The raiders unleashed their savagery in the most naked form. The same had befallen Mirpur, Poonch, Bhimber, Kotli, Jangarh and Naushera in the State. It might have been too late for Indian troops to save Kashmir but the tribesmen had been so busy looting along the way that they had still not arrived in Srinagar when the first Indian troops were flown in and confronted them in Baramulla.

SN Fotedar's study also reveals that Lord Gopinath once went to Goddess Sharika temple atop Hari Parbat on the outskirts of Srinagar. That was sometime after the raid. A Chandi yajna (sacrificial worship of Goddess Chandi) was in progress there then. As soon as those present saw Lord Gopinath, they gathered round him and requested him to save Kashmir. Lord Gopinath's reported answer: "There is no danger, as I am always present on the battle fronts".

With the appointment of Sheikh Abdullah as the head of the Emergency Administration in Kashmir after the unannounced march of Pakistani raiders into J&K, Maharaja Hari Singh and the

Muslim Conference experienced major reverses on the political scene. The Maharaja went into voluntary exile and his place as the constitutional head of the State was occupied by his only son, Karan Singh. The Maharaja's unceremonious departure from Jammu and Kashmir marked the end of autocratic rule and threw up Sheikh Abdullah as the chief spokesman of the people of his homeland. As the Indian and Pakistani troops fought in different sectors of the State in 1947 after the signing of Instrument of Accession, a number of local Muslims fled to Pakistan. Sheikh Abdullah and his administration were not ignorant; in reality the Kashmir leader had been shaken by the horrors of the tribal invasion and had developed abhorrence for 'lovers' of Pakistan that time.

There is documented evidence: In one of his soliloquies, Lord Gopinath was heard saying: "What is the Army (Indian) doing? They get so much rations and yet do not open a direct route to Kashmir for the Ladakhi lamas". His expression was understood only in November 1948 when the Indian Army drew out the tribesmen and regulars of Pakistan from the most strategic Zojila mountain pass, serving as gateway into Kargil and Leh districts of Ladakh in eastern Kashmir. The Instrument of Accession, signed by Maharaja Hari Singh on October 26, led the Governor-General of India to announce on October 27 that the Government had decided to "accept the accession of Kashmir State to the Dominion of India".

Ladakh also acceded to India, and accordingly the region became a part of the Indian Union. Motivated by the desire to occupy a sizeable chunk of the Kashmir territory, Pakistani raiders sought new adventures in the remote districts of Baltistan and Ladakh following their failure to pierce the Indian troops' steel ring in the west of Uri in Kashmir and in the south-west of Jammu. It was in this context that Lord Gopinath was heard, on one occasion, literally ordering the Indian troops to enter Ladakh.

In 1948, Indian troops under the command of General Thimayya entered Ladakh via the Zojila pass, beyond Sonamarg

in Kashmir in November that year. TN Dhar, who lived in a house not far from my ancestral house in Rainawari locality of Srinagar, had reportedly come across an official of Indian Army who was connected with the Ladakh operation. The military official had been informed by his front commander that a 'mysterious' person directed the anti-aggressor operation and gesticulated to Indians at the battle front to fire in certain directions. "This proved correct militarily", the Army official was quoted as saying.

The Christian official, who was keen to have a glimpse of the saint, was conducted to the latter's house by TN Dhar himself. On seeing Lord Gopinath, the Indian official said that the saint-soldier exactly answered to the description given by his front commander. During the Ladakh operation, Dhar had noticed Lord Gopinath seated on a pillow at his Reshi Mohalla residence and gesticulating with his hands as if to direct someone invisible to fire in this or that direction.

A reality as it was: The differences and the areas of disagreement between India and Pakistan became very wide over the question of Kashmir's future. And the most significant development: United Nations Security Council was formally called upon to deal with the Kashmir situation on January 1, 1948. It was request under Article 35 of Chapter VI of the Charter to "recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment" for the pacific settlement of dispute and not for action with respect to acts of aggression as provided for in Chapter VII of the Charter.

The Indian side laboured hard to impress upon the members of the international forum that India's action in Kashmir was intended to help friendly people of the region against the marauding raiders. Judged from the Indian memorandum of January 1 and the speech delivered by Gopalaswami Ayyangar on January 15, it became clear that India was keen to state facts regarding the invasion of Kashmir, circumstances which eventually led to the State's accession to India, obligations of the Indian government, and the measures for ensuring peace in the subcontinent. The Indian side

explained that the Government of India's decision to respond to the appeal of the Kashmir government arose out of two considerations: they could not allow a neighbouring and friendly State to be compelled by force to determine either its internal affairs or external relations and the accession of the State to the Dominion of India made India fully responsible for the defence of Jammu and Kashmir.

Years rolled by. In 1956, Kashmiris appeared panic-stricken. Animated whispers and discussions were triggered for days together, as the future of Kashmir seemed in a state of uncertainty. This egged a number of locals on to approach Lord Gopinath with the plea: "Save us. Save Kashmir". His loaded comment, in a soliloquy, though: "*Kashiri peye trath agar Hindustani fauj vaapas gachi* (Kashmir will be destroyed if the Indian Army left the territory)". And as Lord Gopinath declined to be drawn into discussion, his devotees and petitioners, in fact, wore sullen looks.

It was days later that he finally decided to make available his reply: Indian Army will stay put in Kashmir for the good of the country and the people. True, the Army began to entrench itself, in phases. But the Chinese attack in October 1962 brought to the fore serious inadequacies in the system. Some of the major defects in India's defence structure which had led to humiliation in 1962, had been removed by July-August 1963. Until the 1962 conflict with China, India had in the forward areas 'penny posts' entrusted not with the task of defending Indian soil but with that of waving the country's flag as a physical demonstration of India's jurisdiction over the region of Ladakh. And since the purpose of their establishment was political, they were often ill-equipped, situated at points which were militarily indefensible and lacked a supported line of defence.

Was Lord Gopinath also connected with the Sino-Indian war in mysterious way? 'Yes', was the answer from many of his devotees. According to oral evidence from his sister and some others, including Pran Nath Kaul, who, like SN Fotedar, maintained close,

constant contact with the 'Emperor of Saints', Lord Gopinath played a crucial role, spiritually, until the cessation of hostilities between the armies of India and China. Considered as the principal architect of 'Mission Gopinath', Prant Nath Kaul confirmed, in the course of my conversation with him not long ago, that in the wake of India-China conflict, Lord Gopinath chanted 'Om Nama Shivaye, Nama Shivaye' when, one night, he informed his sister about his plan to stir out of the house. He looked determined and defiant. Hence, his sister did not raise any objection. It was dramatic, unexpected move by Lord Gopinath. He left the house wrapped in a woollen chaddar and carrying only his inseparable companion, the chillum.

Lord Gopinath sprang a surprise once again when after about an hour he returned home. This was followed by the bout of cough and cold he had the next day. Pran Nath Kaul also confirmed the report that Lord Gopinath was forced by a devotee of his to disclose the plan he had secretly implemented the previous night. It was a five-word reply from Lord Gopinath: "To Tibet, to settle matters". Some days later, the war between India and China came to an end.

A saint's perception does differ with that of a soldier's. A soldier sees, while a saint or spiritualist foresees. If there was any doubt about it. It was set at rest by the events or interpretations before the 1965 war broke out between India and Pakistan. Weeks before guns boomed, Indian Army Chief was asked by scribes if he agreed with reports of infiltration into Kashmir from across the border. His reply: "Not a crow can fly in. We are vigilant". India's Defence Minister, YB Chavan, visited Kashmir towards the end of July 1965 and held discussions with the field commanders on different aspects of the defence problem. Chavan, apparently, had little knowledge of Pakistan's design for sending armed infiltrators in Kashmir when he talked to newsmen at the Srinagar airport on August 3 shortly before his departure for Delhi. When asked if it was true that some Pakistani infiltrators had sneaked into the Indian territory, Chavan said: "We have no reports about any intrusion. Our troops are quite vigilant".

Lord Gopinath, on the other hand, had, through bold hints weeks before the commencement of the 1965 war, talked about 'Dance of Death'. He even pointed towards southwest—that is, Gulmarg, Uri and Poonch. In plain language, he had a clear picture of the shape of events to come. India had known that the Pakistani Army officers had been training thousands of people from Skardu across Ladakh to Sialkot across Suchetgarh in Jammu region in sabotage, terrorism and other subversive activities. But Indian Military Intelligence (MI) knew little about the movement and activity of Pakistani infiltrators and saboteurs close to the border in Kargil sector.

That several armed Pakistani infiltrators could successfully avoid detection by Indian Military Intelligence not only when crossing the border but also throughout their trek to Dras towards the end of July, testified to the resourcefulness of the infiltrators. These infiltrators were rounded up as the hostilities broke out between India and Pakistan.

On August 5, 1965, Karan Singh, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, had arranged a tea-party in the spacious lawns of his palace, overlooking the Dal Lake in Srinagar. A number of guests, including Ministers and high civil and military officers, were invited. As the guests were busy munching snacks and sweets, a message was rushed to the palace from the police control room to inform the State Home Minister about the presence of some armed intruders in Beeru in southwest of Srinagar (Lord Gopinath's earlier reference to the southwest). Two officers—DN Kaul, then DIG of Police, and Mohammed Sultan, the Superintendent of Police (SP)—who were also invited by Karan Singh, had to be rushed to organize a company of policemen, besides some guides, for dealing with intruders.

That there was no logic in India's definition of August 5, 1965 as the date of infiltration became clear when three Pakistani infiltrators, captured by the Indian security forces, told newsmen in presence of some police officers in Srinagar on September 7.

1965 that a number of intruders, equipped with rifles and revolvers, guns, mortars and grenades, had crossed into Indian territory, beyond Gulmarg in Kashmir, in the beginning of July.

Over five years later—1971, to be precise—yet another war broke out between India and Pakistan. Indira Gandhi was in place as the Prime Minister of India. Lord Gopinath's language he had used years before the 1971 war about Nehru's daughter (Indira) managing to tackle Sheikh Abdullah, was taking a definite shape after the dismemberment of East Pakistan from West Pakistan—in other words formation of Bangladesh—and the defeat of Pakistan, once again, in her war with India. Sheikh Abdullah was not in Kashmir when the 14-day war was fought by the armies of India and Pakistan. In January 1971, he and two leaders of the Plebiscite Front were externed from Jammu and Kashmir in the course of a State government crackdown on secessionists, followed up with the arrest of 500 workers of the Front in different parts of the Valley and Doda district in Jammu region.

March of events during and after the 14-day war between India and Pakistan in 1971 brought about a change in the attitude of Sheikh Abdullah towards New Delhi. He was convinced by the fact that India had emerged as a strong country in the subcontinent. And he began to realize that Indira Gandhi, victorious and determined as she appeared after the war, and especially after the dismemberment of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, would not hesitate to curb and control him. The Sheikh's none-too-rigid posture helped Moscow as well as some Indian leaders in convincing Indira Gandhi on the need for a dialogue with the Kashmir leader.

Indeed, in March 1972, Sheikh Abdullah was reported to have met a Russian emissary in Delhi to seek Russian mediation for ending the deadlock between him and the government of India. Indirect part played by some Russian leaders in reducing the tension between the two sides was followed by informal meetings the Sheikh had, in the first place, with PN Dhar and PN Haksar, two trusted men of Indira Gandhi, and later with the 'Iron lady' (Indira).

The protracted negotiations between the two sides lasted over two years. The deal over the future political set-up in Kashmir was struck early in 1975. The agreement put down in the shape of an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi was known as 'Kashmir Accord'. Before he was installed the State's Chief Minister in place of Syed Mir Qasim on February 25, 1975, the Sheikh referred to the 'Kashmir Accord' and said: "Basically what has been achieved is a reestablishment of trust and confidence born out of shared and common objectives of the kind which was there all through until 1953". Ambitious, worn-out 'Lion of Kashmir' (Sheikh Abdullah) finally allowed himself to be tamed by Indira Gandhi—a development unambiguously predicated by Lord Gopinath well before his end came in 1968.

Was Lord Gopinath also mysteriously involved in and connected with Indian offensive against Pakistan on Kargil hills in the summer of 1999? As a journalist I covered three wars—in 1965, 1971 and 1999. "Unbelievable sight. Unforgettable character". These words found place on the first page of an unfinished diary on the Kargil war by a young officer of the Indian Army. Of course, he had fascinating, thrilling pieces of information on the war as it raged to free the Tiger Hills from the Pakistani guerrillas. But he admitted his 'failure' to hammer out a convincing answer to his own question: How did this happen?

A hurried look at certain portions of the diary clearly indicated the size and pattern of the conflict, involving the final eviction of the Pakistani armed guerrillas from the all-important Tiger Hills. "True, Indian jawans fought very well in this particular section of Kargil sector. But our action followed the direction from the great man, who died many years ago in Srinagar", the officer said.

The great man? "None other than the famous Kashmiri Pandit saint, who was, and is, for his followers Bhagavaan

Gopinath", the officer replied. Did he meet him when he was alive? The officer's reply: "A Kashmiri Hindu officer of another formation wears a gold locket bearing a picture of the saint. Not long ago, this Kashmiri officer visited my family in Lucknow. And during our informal meeting with him, I and my wife learnt from him about the supernatural powers of the saint, Bhagavaan Gopinath. About a month later, a colour photograph of the saint was delivered in our house by the Kashmiri officer".

There were quite a few casualties on the Indian side during the first three days of Indian offensive against the Pakistani guerrillas in the rugged vicinity of Tiger Hills. In the Tiger Hills, the 16,000-foot-high comical feature in the Drass sector, the Indian troops encountered enormous difficulties, even as certain substantial gains had been registered with the launching of a multi-pronged attack.

The Army officer's incomplete diary said: "Our re-structured strategy bore fruit after an unbelievable sight involving the emergence of this unforgettable character on Saturday, July 3. Appearance on the scene of Bhagavaan Gopinath, wearing white turban and a red tilak on his forehead, was suddenly and swiftly followed by the equally unbelievable energy in the muscle-power of each and every Indian fighter". The diary went on: "Perhaps, nobody would believe what I came across after the fierce, all-night, II-hour assault, leading to the recapture of the Tiger Hills. The super-man, Bhagavaan Gopinath led the assault".

The recapture of Tiger Hills, the most dominating peak in the Kargil sector, was undoubtedly a turning point in the 40-day-old conflict. And by the time Indian tricolour was hoisted atop Tiger Hills, another event of much importance had taken place in the Batalik section. It was the capture of a Pakistani soldier, Naik Inayat Ali (service number 2837712) of 5 Northern Light Infantry (NLI), which is part of 62nd brigade based in Skardu (1999).

After the end of the Kargil war, Islamabad evinced a measure of interest in Kashmir's 'Miracle Man'. Lord Gopinath, though dead and gone, had triggered animated discussions and generated a good deal of curiosity following the circulation of the report about his role as the 'hero' of Kargil hills during the war. The report under my by-line was carried by Daily Excelsior, a leading English newspaper of Jammu and Kashmir.

In fact, Pakistan chancery's attention, a diplomat told me, was drawn by the report's heading 'Bhagavaan Gopinath directed, Indian commados acted'. The Pakistani diplomat got into touch with a Kashmiri journalist after he went through the Kargil articles carried by Daily Excelsior to obtain information about the 'Miracle Man'. Since all these articles had been authored by me at the end of my visit to parts of Kargil region before the end of the war, I was not surprised when the Kashmiri journalist contacted me to confirm unidentified Indian Army officer's statement on how the super-man appeared on the scene to guide the troops during their drive to clear out the Pakistani intruders from the Tiger Hills.

The Pakistani official had no other alternative but to accept a couple of printed booklets on this 'Miracle Man', which contained necessary material on the 'King of Saints', namely, Lord Gopinath. Again, the Pakistani official could not accomplish his another target, namely, obtaining the identity of the Indian Army officer who after the defeat of Pakistani attackers in the vicinity of Tiger Hills, had briefly talked about the appearance of Lord Gopinath as the "real director" for victory. Since this particular Army officer wanted to remain anonymous, I had to adopt 'mother-knows-best' policy on this issue.

Lord Gopinath can safely and easily be described as 'Three in one'. Got it? 'Three in one'—that is, Soldier, Saint and Spiritualist.

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on Lord Gopinathji's birth centenary



CHAPTER - V

KAMA AND KARMA

The word kama and its concept have been interpreted variously by various people. If in literature the word kama has been described as 'lust', or 'pleasure', or desire, Lord Gopinath did, on more than one occasion, clarify that kama connoted sensuous enjoyment.

In the Rig Veda, kama is described as the first movement that arose in one, after it had come into life through the power of fervour or abstraction. In the Atharva Veda, kama or desire, not of sexual enjoyment, but of good in general, is celebrated as a great power superior to all the Gods, and is supplicated for deliverance from enemies. According to one hymn in the Rig Veda, kama is worshipped and said to be unequalled by the Gods; according to another, he is the God of sexual love, like Eros of the Greeks, and Cupid of the Latins.

Some sources of Hindu mythology make us believe that the God of kama-called Kamadeva—was the son of Vishnu and Lakshmi, under the forms of Krishna and Rukhmani. However, according to other sources, he is described as the son of Brahma. In Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna stresses upon controlling kama. He says: "One, who has before his death controlled the impetuosity geared by kama and anger, he is an integrated man—he alone is the happy man". Gita's chapter 5, verse 26: "Those who are self-realised, released from their kama and anger, their mind controlled, such seekers alone gain 'absolute freedom' both here and hereafter".

A confirmed celibate Lord Gopinath was. But at no stage in his lifetime did he preach abstinence from marriage. What he furiously objected to was expression and activity in favour of illegal and unauthorized sexual pursuits or pleasures. His fist of fire against quite a few ill-charactered men and women demonstrated, in

unambiguous terms, his endorsement of the well-known saying in this regard "character lost everything lost".

The endorsement was noted at a time when social scientists were seeking the causes of rising divorce in industrial upheaval, in urbanization, in fragmented family life, in recurrent wars, and in the anxiety of living in a complex world. Lord Gopinath was against infidelity, even as he was not ignorant of the fact that marital infidelity was nothing new in man's history.

It is far from overwhelming a sturdy institution. Most marriages escape it entirely. Others prosper despite its occasional hauntings. When it occurs, wives sometimes find a way to make peace with it. Husbands who must face it in their wives find it harder to accept. A substantial number of marital infidelities defy statistical measurement. Husbands, particularly, are stubbornly secretive when interviewed about their extramarital adventures. Certain newspaper writers make a speciality of reporting the bust, waist, and hip measurements of popular female entertainers. By inference male readers are asked to believe that a female possessing measurements in the given ratio has the best sexual equipment in the world.

In ancient Greece, Plato taught a concept of love that centred upon an ideal of beauty. Christianity introduced the idea of communion between two equal individuals. In medieval times, love was practised as worship of the beloved at a sexual distance. The most plausible concept of love for our era is what one school of psychiatry has described in the term "inter-personal love". Its single prerequisite is emotional maturity—or the wish to achieve it.

Inter-personal love invites husband and wife to accept each other in toto, without reservation, without dismay over differences. It recognizes the fact that there are secrets beneath the protective layers of another's personality. It respects the qualities that make the marriage partner unique. It is fusion, but without loss of individuality.

If Lord Gopinath did not wish to project himself as someone's guru or guide, he did not avoid making relevant references, very seldom though, to the 'pearls' in Hindu scriptures and Hindu dhrama. More often that not, he was found chanting "*Tanmay Manah Shivsankalpumstu*" (May my mind ever lead me on to good thoughts and deeds). This verse in the 34th chapter of Yajurveda reminds the reader of the importance of the human mind in achieving progress.

All our actions are dependent on the state of the mind. Right thought, correct reasoning and resolutions, a sense of proportion, wisdom, faith, love and other good qualities are the result of a well-directed mind. Lord Gopinath, because of his invisible compulsions and requirements, enjoyed being far from the human faces and assemblies. Yet, he appeared near them.

No wonder, Lord Gopinath saw to it, if not on a regular basis, that he, too highlight certain principles and requirements of Hindu dharma. Under it, social duties are classified as 'ashrama dharma', 'verna dharma' and 'sadharna dharma'. Within 'ashrama dharma' the needs of an individual are incorporated within the doctrine of four ends of life— 'purusharthas'.

They are identified as kama, artha (economic needs), dharma (the ethical laws of the universe) and moksha (liberation). In Hinduism, the structure of existence defined by 'purusharthas' is further correlated to social structure through the concept of ashramas. Lord Gopinath did not dispute that kama is as natural for a human being, as burning is for fire. And just as with all natural phenomena, the law of balance has to be followed here as well.

Verse 55 in Gita's chapter 2 used to be recited by Lord Gopinath when the number of visitors, including the needy and the poor, swelled in his room. It says: "When a man casts away, O Partha, all the desires of the mind, ever satisfied in himself, by himself, then he is a man of steady wisdom".

According to Bhagvad Gita, desire is one of the initial causes of the downfall of man. Verses 62-63 in chapter 3 of the Gita run thus: "When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises. From attachment desire is born, from desire arises anger. From anger comes delusion, from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the destruction of discrimination, and from the destruction of discrimination he perishes".

Lord Gopinath also recited verses 38-39 of Gita's chapter 3, depending on the situation or the provocation from any visitor to his house. These verses emphasize: "As a flame is covered by smoke, a mirror by dust and the foetus by the womb, so is knowledge covered by the desire. Knowledge is covered by this insatiable fire of desire, the constant foe of the wise, O son of Kunti".

With an increase in desire, the denominator increases resulting in new agitations and reduction in one's happiness. Therefore, the best way to establish permanent happiness is to reduce the number of desires entertained. Lord Gopinath, in fact, sought to highlight the undisputed finding: Once you understand that your desire is the outcome of your own mind, half the job is done.

According to Hindu scholars, there are three stages of the progress of understanding. They are: 'Shravana', 'Manana' and 'Nididhyasana'. When translated into English these stages are: Hearing, contemplation, Meditation. Lord Gopinath also sought to caution people in general and his devotees in particular against the dangers inherent in actions of most men, who behave just like spiders. They weave a cobweb and then get stuck in it.

If the word karma is generally understood as destiny by most people, the scriptures by karma mean action. The concept of karma encompasses destiny and choice both. If our present condition is the consequence of our present actions, it would mean that we had the choice. Karma is divided into two parts. They are 'Prarabdha'

(destiny) and '*Purushartha*' (free will or self-effort). '*Prarabdha*' is that portion of karma, which is manifest in the present life.

The law of karma, according to one school of thought, includes the provision for us to act at our free will, to discriminate and act rightly. This inherent power in us to overcome our fate is called '*Purushartha*'. Was it in this context that Lord Gopinath also used to occasionally refer to verse 47 in Gita's chapter 2? In this Lord Krishna says: "*Karmani eva te adhikarah*"—you have the freedom (right) to perform an action.

Not a day passes in a person's life when he does not decry the power play of fate. Neither king nor the lowly wayfarer, neither the scholar nor the fool can escape the penalty of the ledger balance of sins, brought forward from prior births. Lord Gopinath was no exception when he was, on more than one occasion, found talking of '*poroo zanam*' (previous birth).

Saints, scholars and scriptural literature are all firm in stressing the inexorable power of destiny. However, laying the blame on the doors of destiny is unlikely to get a man far if he wants to accumulate points of virtue in this life, leading to a better opening balance in subsequent births. Yet another message from Lord Gopinath: Those seeking to be freed from the cycle of rebirths may want to achieve it by negating the effects of past misdeeds.

The frequently asked question is how can one outwit fate? One opinion: Overcoming one's difficulties in life is possible only if so granted by the Supreme Being. If all vehicles setting out on a journey reach their destination, who will seek out God? For, it is only the power of faith, which can alleviate ignorance and make one understand that joy and sorrow in life is due to destiny. Lord Gopinath did convey that even the "preordained" path in one's life is determined largely by one's efforts.

Despite trying very hard, many people find that the desired results are not achieved. This often leads to frustration due to which we tend to blame fate for all the ills and retract into a state of passivity, with the undertone that effort is futile as fate overrules all. Lord Gopinath's answer in the course of his brief session with Justice JN Bhat of Srinagar: Even Lord Rama was no exception to this very human reaction. Setting off in search of the abducted Sita with no obvious clues to her whereabouts, Lord Rama fell into a state of deeper grief. He was then counseled in a manner befitting all of mankind when under duress. Justice Bhat gave this information to me in one of my chance meetings with him in 2003.

By far the most important teaching of Lord Gopinath: Sun and the Moon nourish life. They are, therefore, revered as the two eyes of God. Yet they cannot escape eclipses. All beings have to submit to the decree of fate. It is a matter of cause and effect.

A person may argue that in the scheme of things on earth the concept of 'karma' defies logic, hence, the conduct of a person in the current birth alone ought to be taken into reckoning. However, there is a purpose behind such an exercise, wherein past actions come to haunt or bless a person in life. Without such a symbolism, one may tend to swing to either of the two extremes—egoistic posturing or inertia caused by a sense of fatalism, wherein one passively believes that He who planted will water the plant. Neither of the approaches is recommended for spiritual aspiration.

Justice JN Bhat, a known devotee of Lord Gopinath, was not keeping a good health when I virtually forced him to answer a few questions. These questions were the product of the pressure mounted on me by Pran Nath Kaul of 'Mission Gopinath' and chief patron of the Delhi-based institute, known as Jagatguru Bhagavaan Gopinathji Charitable, Cultural and Research Foundation. The pressure was, clearly, to see me produce a book on Lord Gopinath.

Pran Nath Kaul—I call him the ‘living encyclopaedia’ on Lord Gopinath—is known, as I have stated earlier, for his close proximity to Lord Gopinath. The latter, on one occasion, sought to educate Pran Nath Kaul on devotion, bliss of the Self and God’s accessible nature. Being the man of just a few words, Lord Gopinath sprang a surprise on Kaul by speaking for more than ten minutes.

Lord Gopinath’s words ran thus: It is possible to realise God in this age by adopting the easy method of chanting the Divine name and that it is not necessary to renounce worldly life to achieve this end. No one knows how long one will live. So it is all the more important that one should do whatever possible to progress spiritually without postponing it as the common tendency is to relegate this pursuit to the evening of life. Even if one is blessed with a long life there is no certainty whether one will be healthy enough to concentrate on devotional activities in old age.

Lord Gopinath’s second message: The wordly joys that man experiences are due to the association of the senses and the mind with objects, and hence they are dependent on them. This is the reason why scriptures underscore, time and again, that only the Self (Atman) is capable of giving lasting joy. Without realizing this, man searches for joy outside in the world and the spiritual quest marks the turnaround when he directs this search within.

Message number three on God’s accessible nature: The Supreme Being, who is described in the scriptures as the abode of infinite auspicious qualities, deigned to display His nature for the edification of mankind during His incarnations. It was during His manifestation as Krishna that the quality of His easy accessibility came to the fore fully as He chose to be born under circumstances, which were conducive for anyone to approach Him.

The Bhagavata Purana had highlighted the eternal bliss of Self-realisation through the instance of Lord Krishna showering

His grace on the Gopis. The Rasa play was the highpoint of the relationship between the Lord and the Gopis. An example of bridal mysticism, this is one of the modes of devotion. These cowerd maidens who left their hearths and homes to be in Krishna's company were not simpletons but privileged devotees.

Lord Gopinath himself did not lag behind; he was informal; he was accessible to all and sundry, barring of course those with lust for immoral sexual activity. Well-researched is Prof. Kashi Nath Dhar's book titled 'Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji of Kashmir: The Saint of All Times', which has covered the multi-dimensional facets of the saint's benign personality.

Prof. Dhar has let it be known that Lord Gopinath was an 'introvert' always engrossed with his inner life, and has, therefore, posed a sphinx-like problem to "us as the exact purport of the subliminal plane on which he was stationed". Even though his temporal life seemed to be an open book, yet the urgency and utility of reading between its lines can in no way be ruled out, Prof. Dhar argued. He was quite on the mark when he also argued that it needed to be conceded that such obscure and unintelligible medium used by Lord Gopinath will naturally lead to wildgoose-chase of inferences, corolaries and guesses, which can at times be baffling, deluding and far removed from reality.

There is no denying that a number of people have been found to be emotionally attached to Lord Gopinath. A note of caution: Emotional attachment often blurs the exact image of such towering souls as Lord Gopinath was.



Lord Gopinathji and his companion, *Chillum*

CHAPTER - VI

BALANCE IS BEAUTIFUL

"Yi chuna dayus manzoor". The four-word Kashmiri language expression when translated into English will run thus: "This is not acceptable to God". The expression came from Lord Gopinath immediately after senseless violence broke out in parts of the capital city of Srinagar and some unruly Muslim demonstrators chanted slogans such as "Jis Kashmir ko khoon sey seencha woh Kashmir hamara hai" and "Hum keya chahtey, Pakistan".

This happened in April 1968, when Lord Gopinath was found by his devotees physically weak, most of the time engrossed in his own world. *"Jis Kashmir ko khoon sey seencha woh Kashmir hamara hai"* (That Kashmir which has received our bloods, is ours)" and *"Hum keya chahtey, Pakistan"* (What we want is Pakistan)" did not come as a surprise, as the authors of these slogans as well as the common man had expected unpleasant developments after the pro-Pakistan lobby seemed deriving advantage as well as pleasure out of the anti-Delhi attitude adopted by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah after his release from detention in March 1968. The Sheikh was arrested on May 8, 1965.

April 1968 was eventful, particularly after Sheikh Abdullah addressed public meetings in southern Kashmir. His hostile attitude towards New Delhi could also be borne out by his utterances at a public meeting at Shopian, where he questioned the presence of the Indian Army in Kashmir. Happily for him, nobody on the occasion found it necessary to sit up and tell him that he himself played prominent role in getting the Indian troops in 1947 to fight back the Pakistani invaders. The Sheikh's public address at Shopian was quickly followed by a series of violent incidents in Srinagar, all loaded with anti-India accent.

One of the incidents took place near Lord Gopinath's house. Slogans like "Hindustan Murdabad", "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Indian dogs go back" were chanted. Lord Gopinath and some visitors in his room heard the provocative slogans. Each one maintained silence. Lord Gopinath broke his silence only when anti-India demonstrators raised the slogan "Hum keya chahtey, Pakistan". Pat came the pronouncement from Lord Gopinath "Ye chuna dayus manzoor".

Yet another significant pronouncement from the angry saint: "*Dilus ta demagus darmiyan santulan chu setha zaroori. Santulan chu sundar agar bekiy thavith*". Its translation into English: "Maintaining balance between heart and head is very important. Balance is beautiful only if ensured".

Lord Gopinath had third important signal, which he conveyed to Abdul Majid Lone, a functionary of the Jammu and Kashmir CID, during a late evening session with him towards the end of April 1968. Lone was taken aback when Lord Gopinath smilingly asked him how the "tall man" (Sheikh Abdullah) was doing. "He wants grant of self-determination right to the Kashmiris", Lone told him. Lord Gopinath, too, was quick in his reply: "*Hindustani sarkaras chena beyi kanh kaim. Ye shakhs marnavi hatabadein lookan. Haq-e-khudiradiyat rozes akh khaab* (The Indian government hasn't any other work to do. This man will get hundreds of people killed. Self-determination right will be only a dream unfulfilled)."

There is evidence to suggest that in spite of the periodic provocations from some individuals and groups of Muslim community, Lord Gopinath considered the average Kashmiri Muslim as peace-loving and, in fact, wanted Muslims to acquire knowledge as unbiased human beings. "Knowledge is a treasure; zeal without knowledge is like a fire without light".

If Lord Gopinath comes down among the Kashmiris now, he must undergo a change, and a change from good to evil, from virtue to vice, from happiness to misery, and from best to worst. His teaching "Knowledge is a treasure" did hold water till he was alive. Years after his passing away in May 1968, history bore testimony to the fact that many Kashmiri Muslims proved themselves opponents of all books of knowledge.

A thing of the past, though, became quite an event in Kashmir in April 1984. The police went against a local writer. The step against him was, curiously, ordered about four years after he printed his book in Urdu language in Srinagar and circulated in parts of the State in May 1980. The writer, Tej Bahadur Bhan, was baffled by the action against him. Happily for Bhan, some Opposition and Congress members in the Indian Lok Sabha, in Delhi, condemned the government, headed by Farooq Abdullah, for the writer's arrest after he had supported Darwin's theory of evolution in his book.

While most people began to think that this Darwin hatred had come rather late, Muslim fundamentalists in Jammu and Kashmir were dead earnest about keeping the "corrupting" influences away. The fundamentalists found Bhan's book highly objectionable and demanded it be banned and the writer prosecuted. There was already a long list of banned books in Kashmir and most people outside the State might have been surprised to find Gita in the ban list of Kashmir University.

That was the time when Kashmir's education department found itself in a quandary. A serious problem had cropped up, making it difficult for the authorities to support the saying "Knowledge is a treasure; zeal without knowledge is like a fire without light". During GM Sadiq's tenure as Chief Minister, the Muslim militants had whipped up popular sentiments against a famous printed document titled 'Book of knowledge' which allegedly contained some anti-Islamic material.

After Sheikh Abdullah's return to power in 1975, Muslim fundamentalists succeeded in removing several books from educational institutions and reference libraries. These books included studies on Darwin's theory of evolution, *A Short History of the World* by HG Wells and *Monuments of Civilisation*.

Lord Gopinath, it is already an open secret, religiously chanted "Jai Shree Ram" and "Jai Maa Gangay". "Maa" is mother; "Gangay" is Ganga, which Hindus consider as holy river. If Lord Gopinath wished to come down among men, he would get disgusted and dejected after knowing at least a couple of incidents in his homeland, Kashmir. In mid-February 1986, hundreds of Muslims in Kashmir were not inoperative—indeed, their reaction was violent to the reopening of the 'disputed' Ramjanambhoomi temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh (UP). The provocation was from the Hindu organization, Shiv Sena, whose workers celebrated the 'liberation' of the temple while parading the main thoroughfares in the Jammu city.

The title of the Hindi film 'Ram Teri Ganga Maili' was used as a mocking slogan by the crowds that attacked dozens of houses, shops and temples in Kashmir. Provoked by the court order reopening Ramjanambhoomi temple of Ayodhya, groups of Muslim zealots rushed about wildly amid chanting of 'Ram Teri Ganga Maili' slogan. Kashmiri Hindus had nothing to do with the court order. Yet in some towns and villages quite a number of Hindus were subjected to the violent anger of a section of Muslim zealots.

It was for the purpose of endowing man with the correct perspective that Lord Gopinath asked us to synchronise our daily life with the Supreme Being. He did, on more than one occasion, told his devotees: God is never demanding nor is He swayed by temporal paeans, but is ever ready to offer succour. It is because of His attributes that man is admonished—If we can temporise and praise an unworthy person for mere transitory gains, how much

more beneficial it will be when one's thoughts are attuned to the Supreme Power.

Chanting the glory of the Lord is the ultimate exercise since every salutation is a celebration of His divine trait. The resultant joy that envelops the aspirant is an experience intrinsic with the cherished goal of reaching God. A person may demand to know how the glossary of the Lord's characteristic traits can help one in life. The high-voltage saint (Lord Gopinath) had this to say: The burgeoning divinity resulting from a regular and systematic chanting of the 'Vishnu Sahasranama' and 'Bhawani Sahasranama' as well as 'Panchastavi' helps one deal effectively with life's quint essential problems progressively taking one closer to God realization.

When His help is sought God embarks on His rescue mission with alacrity, an aspect celebrated by many a parable. Another trait is that of rendering help to refugees without declaring it to entire world. This, Lord Gopinath told his devotees and visitors, is the essence of His promise in the Gita, "I will alleviate your sins and offer My protection".

One day a group of students, all from primary classes, surrounded Lord Gopinath. He spared at least ten minutes, enquiring from each one of them the subjects being taught in the school. Nor was it all. He even asked some of them their ambitions as they progressed in their academic life. One replied that he wanted to become a doctor, another boy wanted to be an engineer. Third boy's reply: "I want to become a teacher".

At this stage, Lord Gopinath stopped his conversation, looked at the boy, then looked at others. After a little while he again addressed the boy, who wanted to become a teacher. Lord Gopinath's loaded comment: "Teaching Maths or science subjects is fine. What will finally be needed is scriptural knowledge".

A common refrain among people, specially the geriatric, is the apparent indifference of the younger generation to matters spiritual. The fretfulness stems from the perceived lacuna in the youth with regard to pursuit of scriptural knowledge. Traditionally, scriptural literature has played the role of an educator, with the warring forces of good and evil constantly highlighted in order that one may elect to read the path of virtue.

Lord Gopinath held the view that Ramayana is a moral epic, which occupies a vital place as an instrument of character formation by portraying the character of Anjenya and others. Even the arch villain Ravana exhibited fearless valour and unwavering faith in divinity. God granted him every imaginable power and pelf, but did not bless with the most desirable gift of all, that of 'Satsang' (good company).

On the other hand, Sugriva lost his kingdom, his wife and was forced to live the life of a fugitive, but he engineered a reversal of fortune for the better due to his association with Anjaneya, the skilled diplomat, the ideal minister, the ultimate messenger and courier with a commendable presence of mind. Intuitively aware of Sugriva's insecurity, he communicated the acceptability of Rama and Lakshmana to the former by carrying them on his shoulders for their first direct contact with Sugriva. With his mind focused on the search mission at hand, he emerged unscathed from encounters that could tax the ingenuity of any other person. He straddles the epic like a colossus both in terms of valour and virtue.

A much debated point is with regard to Anjaneya's superior strength. Rama himself raises the issue with Agastya at a later date. Anjaneya was greater than Vali and Sugriva. Why then, when he was on the side of Sugriva, did he not use his strength to finish off Vali? There follows a narration by the sage wherein an exuberant Anjenya, blessed by the celestials, was a victim of amnesia resulting out of the curses of ascetics whose hermitage he routinely ransacked.

The mental veil is subsequently lifted when Jambavan makes him realise his strength.

The strength of seeing things before their occurrence, possessed by Lord Gopinath, was acknowledged without any reservation. That he had foreseen the fall in moral, mental, ethical, social, cultural and religious standards was illustrated by his emphasis on 'sezar' (straightforwardness), 'pazar' (truth) and 'shozar' (purity). High ideals, specifically meant for his Kashmiri masses. If he were in his physical form this time (2004), he would perhaps endorse my view that his homeland (Kashmir) is far too commercialized and communalized, leaving little room for high ideals such as 'sezar', 'pazar' and 'shozar' to embrace the average native of the land.

It is universally known and, in fact, acknowledged that the long period of militancy in the region has resulted in the flow and subsequent distribution of vast reserves of money into the hands of the populace which also included undesirables. Preachers of morality and spiritual values have been marginalized by the lovers of bombs and bullets.

From the 14th century onwards and with the advent of Islam, we have had saints who wrote and preached through the medium of Kashmiri language in the Valley and in Dogri in Jammu province. Whether or not one or some among these saints had predicted what the people of J&K began to witness with the commencement of militancy in 1989-90, is debatable, even as some old people in the region may claim to have known 'this' or 'that' God-man to have said so.

However, there is evidence to suggest that Lord Gopinath, who found no difference between the two, one professing Hinduism and the other Islam, had summed up the desirable qualities of an ideal human being in three crisp Kashmiri words, 'sezar', 'pazar' and 'shozar'. Triloki Nath Dhar 'Kundan, a Kashmiri Pandit research

scholar, has, in his book titled 'The Saint Extraordinary: Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji—His Life and Message', has aptly explained that rectitude or straightforwardness in behaviour can give people satisfaction and endear them to all they deal with. 'Pazar' or truth should be people's nature, their habit and their duty. And finally the third quality of 'shozar', or purity, is very significant.

Even as 'Kundan' admits that he was not lucky enough to have Lord Gopinath's darshan when he was in his gross body, his book has confirmed that the Saint Extraordinary spoke very little and that too in low whispers and remained engrossed with the spiritual world of his own although outwardly appearing to be very much in this mundane world. He would seldom address any visitor directly. The conversation would either be indirect or through gestures.

Beauty of the man under reference: Lord Gopinath never adopted any outward garb of a saint. Neither did he grow beard nor did he wear any ochre dress like the usual mendicants. His dress was that of an ordinary Kashmiri Pandit. Till he breathed his last in May 1968, Lord Gopinath had changed eleven different residences in the vicinity of Srinagar. Some attribute it to a set of compulsions or pressures, mostly from his domestic front. Some others attribute the phenomenon of change from one house to another to his restless nature.

Triloki Nath Dhar 'Kundan' is categorical in his assessment of the phenomenon. This, he says, shows the restlessness of 'Atma', the individual self to seek union with 'Parmatma', the Universal Self. The argument of 'Kundan': He moved from house to house, perhaps in his pursuit and did not rest till he attained his objective. Having attained the desired goal in the house of his niece, he attained his 'Maha samadhi' there in May 1968.



KHEER BHAWANI MANDIR

Lord Gopinathji's Maata Maal

CHAPTER - VII

PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE

"Maata Maal"? Answer: Mother's house. Traditionally, Kashmiri Pandits, by and large, attached much importance to *"Maata Maal"*. Lord Gopinath, of course, was a tradition-ridden, if not religion-ridden, Kashmiri Pandit. But his views on his 'Maata Mall' were different altogether.

"Ais gachav Maata Maal" (we will go to Mother's house), was his message when, on one occasion, his sister, niece and SN Fotedar found him packing items such as his chillum, some tobacco, some hashish, some rice, some flowers. Fotedar, who became his biographer after 1968, as well as some others in the room at that point of time failed to understand what Lord Gopinath actually meant.

Within minutes the super-man chose to be unambiguous and announced that his 'Maata Maal' was at Tullamula, the famous Hindu shrine. The shrine is associated with the Hindu Goddess, Ragnya Devi. Lord Gopinath's mother was the daughter of Prasad Joo Parimoo, a saint, who commanded much influence in his time. The story has already been told that he had a vision at the Tullamula shrine of Ragnya Devi, who chided him for having adopted a son. Saint Parimoo was told by the Goddess that She herself was taking birth in his house. A daughter was, indeed, born, who was destined to be Lord Gopinath's mother. Hence, Tullamula shrine served as Lord Gopinath's 'Maata Maal'!

The shrine abounds in Chinar trees in and around the compound complex within which is a hexagonal spring wherein deity of Goddess Ragnya is decorated in a small white marbled temple. The legend goes that Lord Rama worshipped Mother Ragnya during his exile and desired Hanuman to shift the seat of Mother after the expiry of exile period. He brought it to Shadipora (Kashmir) and was later shifted to the present site at Tullamula as

per the wish of Mother Ragnya conveyed in dream to one Pandit Rughnath Gadroo, it is believed.

The historic temple of Tullamula, also called Kheer Bhawani, was built by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1912. It was later renovated by Maharaja Hari Singh. Maharaja Pratap Singh held the shrine in high esteem. He used to pay obeissance at least twice a year. The Maharaja, who respected saints and fakirs of the region, was nonetheless known for his inquisitive nature. He did demonstrate his willingness to test the ability and intuitive powers of even a saint.

An instance in this regard: During his first encounter with Kashmir's well-known saint-poet, Krishnajoo Razdan, Maharaja Pratap Singh inside the shrine itself enquired if the saint could tell him about the object of his worship. According to SL Razdan, a grandson of the saint-poet, he (Krishnajoo Razdan) thought for a while and then replied that the Maharaja worshipped 'shiver', the bird that digs out the anger of Lord Shiva.

This was a fact. And hence, a measure of surprise for the Maharaja. Interestingly, the Maharaja did not stop there. He seemed set to put Krishnajoo Razdan to another test. The former told the latter that he would regard him a saint if the water of the Kheer Bhawani spring changed colour seven times. If SL Razdan were to be believed, the saint-poet performed the wonder; the colour of the water did change seven times to the utter astonishment of the Maharaja.

Lord Gopinath, who spent most of his time in Srinagar, was also a known worshipper of Goddess Sharika. Hence, his occasional trips or pilgrimage to Hari Parbat fort. The fort contains a temple revered for its image of the Goddess Sharika. The 18th century fort tops the Sharika hill, which is clearly visible, rising to the west of Dal Lake.

The fort was constructed by the Afghan Governor, Atta Mohammed Khan from 1776 but the surrounding wall is much

older. It was built between 1592 and 1598 during the rule of Akbar. The Mughal Emperor (Akbar) founded what was known as Naagar Nagar city in the foot of the hillock and constructed a 28-foot-high wall. Naagar Nagar Qalai around the city served as the contonment for the Mughal Army.

Anything of and for Lord Shiva was equally dearer to Lord Gopinath. No wonder, then, his weakness for the abode of his Guru (Lord Shiva) in eastern Kashmir—Amarnath shrine, to be precise. Situated at 4175 metres, the cave shrine, which is 45 km from Pahalgam, contains a natural ice lingam, the symbol of Lord Shiva. And the lingam waxes and wanes with the moon.

Then it was Shankaracharya temple, located atop a hill in Srinagar. The Shiva temple, according to famous chronicler, Kalhana, was constructed by Raja Gopadatya in 371 BC, and, as such, is the oldest shrine in Kashmir, though it is not certain if the temple existed in the same form as it had been built more than 2,000 years ago.

Several other places of worship that were visited, though not often, by Lord Gopinath also included Jawalamukhi temple at khrew 20, km southeast of Srinagar, Bhadra Kaali temple in Handwara sector of Kashmir, Guptaganga and Jyeshthadevi, besides Tushkaraja Bhairva temple, in Srinagar. His visits to these and other Hindu shrines in his homeland were not meant to spread the religion he professed; they were meant to spread the message, namely, preparing oneself to the required level of eligibility for God-realisation.

A common misconception of the people is with regard to the age at which one should embark on the spiritual quest. Given over to his daily worry of making provisions for his family or misdirecting his energy in retaliatory tactics of pettifogging people, a person convinces himself with plausible excuses of postponing the devotional way of life. One of the frequently aired views is with regard to visiting holy shrines or places of worship—it is for the post-retirees, septuagenarians, is one argument.

Some others embark on pilgrimages as part of a quid pro quo arrangement—a thanksgiving for favours specifically asked and gained. To a few the entire issue may appear puzzling and they may wonder if spiritual journey is akin to a geographic destination. Tourist spots offer travellers numerous sites for visual or intellectual gratification. Similarly, can a devotee derive benefits by traveling to the Himalayas? If a person were told that the journey should begin from within oneself he then wonders as to the merits of undertaking a journey filled with discomfort or hardships. Why do the scriptures recommend that a person visit places of religious importance?

Lord Gopinath's message or answer: It is to prepare oneself to the required level of eligibility for God-realisation. In His visitations the Supreme Being lives a contemporaneous life but is seldom recognized. It is not always necessary that He should appear in the prescribed form of a readily recognizable deity. However, at the appropriate time of spiritual maturity, the seeker can perceive and rejoice the Supreme Being as revealed to him.

Scriptural recommendations are stated after due consideration to human nature which vacillates from one goal to another. Journeying to holy places without preconditions or expectations of reward helps one emerge from the impasse caused by living mechanically on a material plane. This was teaching from Lord Gopinath. A devotee who endeavours the hardest in the right path shown by the God shall receive the ultimate reward of attaining His feet.

Many of us heap fulsome praise on our superiors in the hope of getting into their good books. On occasions, we dissemble, speaking with a forked tongue as it were, for personal gain or favour. Such actions, since they go against latent values, often sit heavily on our minds like blight, since the awareness that one is forced to praise non-existent qualities is never far from one's consciousness. Yet the duplicity is often par for the course.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Lord Gopinath for the purpose of endowing man with the correct perspective asked his devotees and other visitors, it not every time, to synchronise their daily life with the Supreme Being. God, he would insist, is never demanding nor is He swayed by temporal paeans, but is ever ready to offer succour.

Every epoch spawns a man of the hour who guides mankind through the minefield of irresolute belief with his own philosophical approach to matters spiritual. Lord Gopinath did, as a result of his action and thinking, of approach and ability, and of devotional duty and beauty, prove that there is a growing awareness of inherent discipline not conditioned by the exigencies of external forces.

Lord Krishna's discourse, Lord Gopinath explained, very briefly though when three sadhus, all non-Kashmiri, called on him one afternoon, is the ideal disciplinary tool. The Bhagvad Gita advocates a choice of three disciplines, the way of knowledge, the way of devotion and the way of action. The essential principle is to yoke the mind to the Lord.

A Kashmiri Hindu woman one day met Lord Gopinath and complained that despite sitting in meditation as a daily ritual for 20 years, she was no closer to God. The fault, Lord Gopinath pointed out, was not in the system but in the individual's efforts. Just as a student facing an examination in mathematics would fare miserably if he were to end the previous day studying history, so too does one's choice reflect on one's spiritual performance.

Equally important was Lord Gopinath's viewpoint: Often men delude themselves into thinking that giving up all worldly duties and living like a recluse in the mountains will gain them what they seek. True renunciation is best exemplified by His manifestation as Lord Krishna wherein living within the codified society he demonstrated the life of perfection by living it. He personified non-attachment in its entirety, coveting neither material nor emotional appendages in magnificent resonance with His true Self.

In his invocation song of Ram Charit Manas, Tulsidas says: "To saints and evil men I pray, both bring sorrow in their way; one leaves us sad when he departs, the others' advent pains our hearts". Lord Gopinath's spoken words were not without meaning inasmuch as they were uttered in the context of the happenings around him. And he did say that life's attendant sorrows "are largely man-made". People tend to hanker after amorphous gratifications. According to him, the three-fold attachment to spouse, progeny and material possessions keeps us riveted on impermanent aspects of life; a cause and effect cycle.

Families of human beings began to disintegrate, albeit gradually, since mid-1960s. The situation, in this regard, entered a crucial phase after the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in the beginning of 1990. Curiously, this notwithstanding, a 70-year-old man still expects to be consulted by his grown up family on every issue, a woman feels affronted if her married son and his wife leave her out of shopping expeditions. Instead, if such energy were to be directed towards the God, the internal remuneration will result in lasting happiness.

Despite being well versed in scriptures, Tulsidas was passionately devoted family man. Unable to bear even a temporary separation from his wife, he went to see her and his conduct amazed her and she advised him: "With yearnings as you have for this perishable body of mine, if you seek Rama instead, fulfilment would be yours". The wisdom of the words touched him to the core. And renouncing earthly passions, Tulsidas turned to spiritual knowledge.

Sage Valmiki was an ordinary hunter eking out a mundane existence. A chance meeting with sages was the turning point in his life. When the wise men counseled him to renounce his sinful ways since he would have to atone for the same, the hunter laboured under the illusion that his wife and family would partake of his misfortunes if any. When the family refused, and instead asked

him to provide for them within the confines of virtuous living, his mind was awakened. He subsequently authored the incomparable Ramayana. Readers have often wondered at the question raised by the sage to Narada of the presence of a perfect man, if any, endowed with virtuous qualities— "straightforward, strong, charitable, grateful, truthful, steadfast in resolution, honesty in living, merciful to all creatures, well educated, clever (intelligent), charming and magnetic personality, self assertive control over emotions, radiant, bereft of envy, and whose anger could frighten even celestials in a battlefield". Lord Rama was such a man.

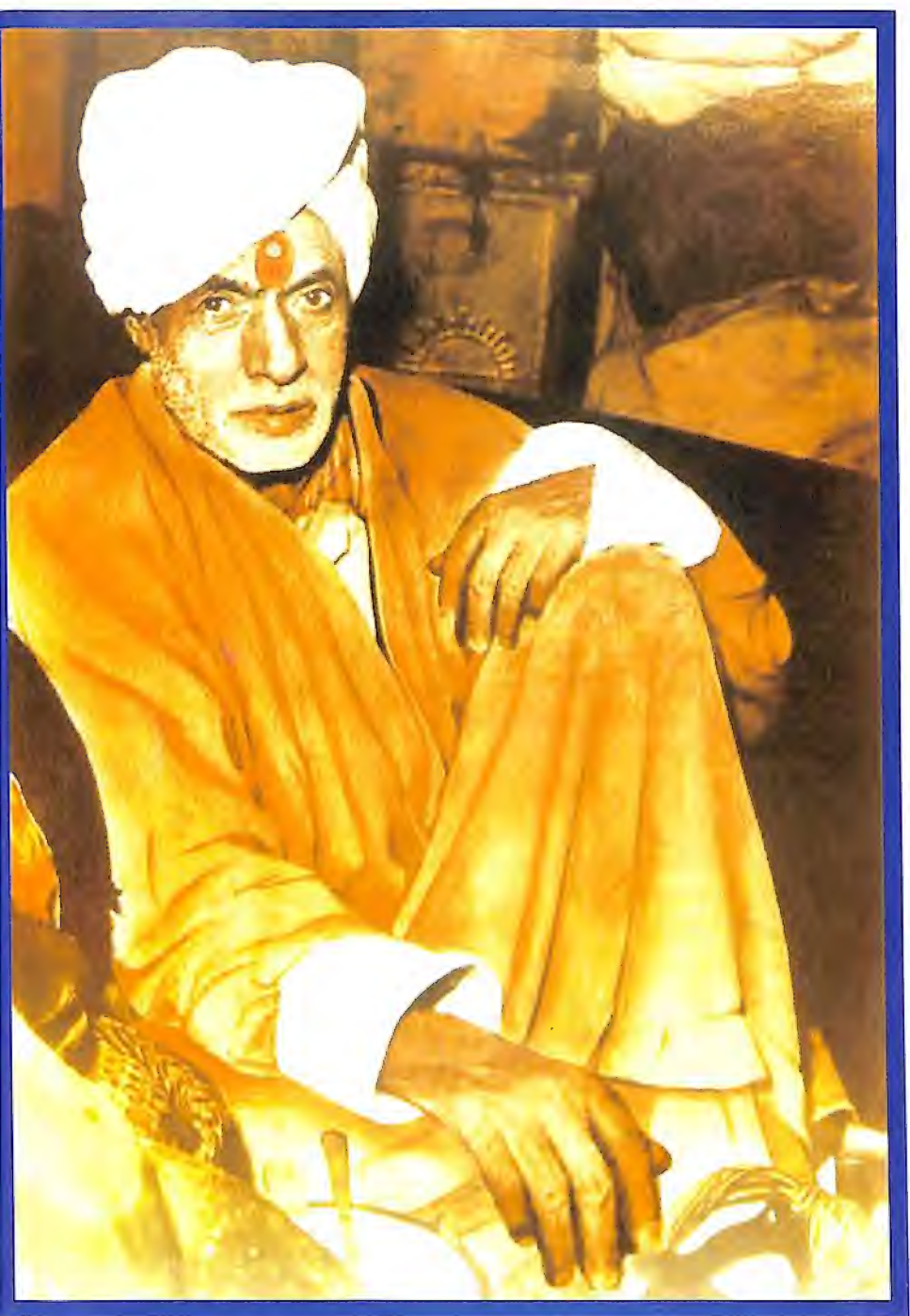
No wonder, Lord Gopinath designed on a sheet of paper two 'Om' symbols in the Sharda script during 1924-25. All the space around and within these two symbols was filled with the words, 'Ram' and 'Shiv'.

Lord Gopinath's "Be Good and Do Good" religion was based on a different philosophy. "*Meyon Bhagvaan, Meyon Mazhab karni zahein bardaasht za cheez-Akh, affra taffri; doam, khodgaraz and khodgarzi*" (My God, my religion will never tolerate two things—one, disruption and, second, selfish people and selfishness).

Obviously, Lord Gopinath had felt and foreseen that God would be used by the organized religions for political purposes. He could not deny the abusiveness of religion as well. How much blood was shed in the name of religion during crusades and pogroms? How many wars and terrorist movements were carried under the garb of religion?

According the Hinduism, the nature of the Self is 'sat-chit-ananda' or absolute 'Existence-Knowledge-Bliss'. The individual needs only to realise his true nature, which is possible through the path shown by Hindu scriptures. Buddhism promises 'nirvana' and Sikhism promises the end of all suffering through the paths specified by these respective religions.





Lord Gopinathji (1898-1968)



CHAPTER - VIII

DEPENDABLE CRISIS MAN

“No, I just don’t believe in miracles”, declared Dr Subhash Tyagi, physician and cardiologist, in a clinic in east Delhi in the beginning of the year 2000. He was provoked by his Kashmiri Pandit patient, who asked: “Dr Tyagi, do you believe in miracles performed by Godmen or saints?”

What was the provocation for the Kashmiri patient? During the last quarter of 1999, Dr Subhash Tyagi had a shocking news for the patient. After examining the patient and x-ray report, Dr Tyagi was blunt in his expression as he told him that he suffered from tuberculosis and that his lungs required extraordinary medical aid and advice. The patient as well as his wife were speechless for a short while.

The couple recovered from the shock after Dr Tyagi held out a firm assurance: “The patient can get rid of the disease within three months. But he has to undergo some tests and religiously follow the doctor’s instructions and treatment”. The patient started taking medicines prescribed by his doctor soon after reaching his house.

The patient’s wife, on the other hand, contacted her sister in Maharashtra, who recommended the need for “second opinion”; in plain language, another specialist should examine him. This was followed by the patient’s visit to Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals at Sarita Vihar on Delhi-Mathura road. On November 15, 1999, Dr RK Mani, senior consultant in respiratory medicine, intensive care and sleep disorders, examined the patient.

Dr Mani satisfied the patient by the style he adopted while examining him. After a 20-minute examination, Dr Mani confirmed, if any confirmation was required, that the Kashmiri patient had serious lungs problem—tuberculosis, in one word. Dr

Mani's prescription: medicines, some tests 'immediately', no sexual act with the spouse at least for three weeks.

The patient had not, at that point of time, lost hope. In fact, he silently worshipped Lord Gopinath, after Dr Mani had directed him to make himself available for bronchoscopy test two hours later. The patient's silent prayer: "Lord Gopinath, you have to act here and now. Please do a miracle. Tuberculosis is nothing short of a social stigma. I am not prepared for it". While Dr Mani himself carried out the test, the patient kept appealing to Lord Gopinath to come to his rescue and to prove medical men wrong.

The patient's wish was granted. About 30 minutes after the test was over, Dr Mani called the patient in his room and announced: "it is surprising; it is something unusual, unexpected. The report on bronchoscopy has the good news for you. You are not suffering from any serious ailment in your lungs. The report rules out tuberculosis. Now I have to change medicines I prescribed earlier in the day". The patient wore a smile. But he did not deem it necessary to inform Dr Mani about the 'superman', Lord Gopinath. The patient nonetheless, asked if restrictions on sex with his spouse will continue for the period specified in the course of the morning medical examination. "Yes", came the reply from Dr Mani. "Because other tests have yet to be carried out". Dr Mani informed the patient.

The patient had, before his return to his residence, made up his mind for a game of sex with his spouse the same night. The wife demonstrated signs of unwillingness to oblige the defiant husband. In the husband's study room Lord Gopinath's photograph had already occupied a prominent place. The wife told the impatient husband to show respect to the 'Great Saint' (Lord Gopinath). The husband was quick in his reply: Lord Gopinath only opposed marital infidelity.

This was followed by a happy development: The wife yielded. Dr. Mani's patient looked at the photograph. In typical Brahminical

attire, Lord Gopinath was staring at the patient. His colour photograph clearly showed that he was supporting a six tier white turban and wearing a *pheran*, long loose gown. His luminous eyes were penetrating through like x-ray.

And as the act-sex with the wife—was launched by the husband, the wife was reassured by the husband that Lord Gopinath wanted it to happen to prove the doctor wrong. The husband had, of course, taken the doctor's medicines. But he felt 'cured' after he released Byron's 'Fountain of Bliss'!

The Kashmiri lover of the Lord had, by then, obtained from Pran Nath Kaul of 'Mission Gopinath' relevant printed material on the super-man. A portion of the material was replete with miracles performed by Lord Gopinath. Mind-boggling revelations vis-à-vis the powers of the super-man have surfaced, calling for detailed investigations by researchers in his homeland.

If one of the followers of Lord Gopinath talked of his ride on the back of the lion sent by Goddess Sharika to his abode at Chandpora one night, several others have already spread stories, verbally as well as in writing, about his olympic heights of spirituality. Prof. JN Sharma, one among the most passionate devotees of the super-man, has let it be known that during one stage of the spiritual discipline, Lord Gopinath's concentration "was so intense and he grew so unaware of his body that a rat nibbled a hole in a heel of his".

Prof. Sharma has also stated that the super-man, in his later years, took to another type of spiritual practice. He would emit vibrations from some parts of his body, for example, the knees and the intestines, and through his chillum smoking. Prof. Sharma, an accomplished scholar of English and well-versed in Sanskrit, too, has wittingly or unwittingly, provided material for researchers by making a pointed reference to a few miracles performed by the superman. According to him, Lord Gopinath brought the dead back to life temporarily or permanently, as the situation demanded.

One, to quote Prof. Sharma, Lord Gopinath asked someone (probably, Mahakaala, the God of death) to wait till the next day to revive the dead father of a girl whose marriage was being performed just then. The man came back to life, blessed the newly-wed couple, and died for good at about noon the next day.

Second instance cited by Prof. Sharma: Once, two cooked fish, chewed and swallowed by Lord Gopinath himself, were vomitted by him as two live fish, because the situation demanded that. The fish sprang into the nearby spring, and swam away!

HN Kaul, who was a noted journalist, placed himself on record as saying that his wife had made Lord Gopinath the "honorary physician in absentia of us both, me and my son, Ashish". Kaul prized two things in life—one pertaining to his son and the other concerning his respiratory and liver ailments. A pinch of ash, obtained by Kaul's wife from Lord Gopinath during his lifetime, did wonders in case of the crying Ashish, while a cigarette butt came to the rescue of Kaul in distress.

Kaul wrote: One day Ashish suddenly doubled up in pain and his yelps and shrieks were piercing through my heart like lances. It was midnight and I was trying to ring my doctor out of his slumber when my wife brought Ashish to me, parked him on my lap, opened a rusty tin box, scooped up a pinch of ash and put it in the crying child's mouth. Suddenly like a tuat wire let loose at both ends, the child's stiffness vanished and he calmed down. Within five minutes he was his giggling self again with no pain or sickness. I smiled through misty eyes in utter disbelief. How could a pinch of ash calm a child, who seemed dangerously ill?

Doctors had advised HN Kaul to cut down his liquor as his liver had lost its potency to keep track with his intake. Like all good things in life, he stubbornly disagreed with the advice and fell like a pole axe. Kaul put the story in black and white: "I was not bothered much about the liver but the pain was unbearable and I had started living on pethidine shots and mandril tablests....

Touched by my plight, my wife tried her wildest best to persuade me to swallow a pinch of the holy ash—she has a swell stock of the ash—but firstly because of pride of my convictions and secondly because I never wanted her to score over me, I brushed her aside. . . . I was itching for a smoke and pleaded with my wife for a fag despite doctor's strict warning I was pleasantly surprised when she gave me a butt of a Charminar, she dug out from the folds of her purse. . . . A fag after three days is just like posting maiden kiss on the lips of love and with these pleasant thoughts I slipped into deep slumber after five days of agony and tossing about in the bed". His wife attributed his miraculous escape from the clutches of death not to the liver-extract and terramycin and the hundreds of tablets and capsules he had consumed but to the healing touch of Lord Gopinath.

According to Triloki Nath Dhar 'Kundan', while Lord Gopinath's aim had been to know the truth, mitigate the suffering of people and give spiritual guidance to those who sought it from him, he did no miracles in his childhood and demonstrated no super natural powers. Why should he have done so? After all he had not, to quote 'Kundan' to "impress anyone or prove his stature or position".

'Kundan' has stated that Lord Gopinath's path was the path of "intense penance, search within, control of senses, command on the eight elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, wisdom and the ego ('I' ness)". He would fix his gaze at water in his container as if penetrating deep into essence of the third basic element of water after earth and fire.

There were quite a few people, including the renowned poet of Kashmir, Master Zinda Kaul, who had seemed somewhat averse to the chillum smoking of Lord Gopinath. On the other hand, 'Kundan' vehemently defended the companionship between Lord Gopinath and his chillum. In puffing at the chillum he would perhaps be concentrating on the element of air also, which, according to Greek philosopher Anaximenes (570 to 510 BC) was

the fundamental substance. He held that the soul also was air only and fire was nothing but rarified air and that the condensed air became water first, then earth and finally stone.

"Whatever the degree of an individual Kashmiri's faith, the fact remains that the life of most Kashmiris is dominated by the presence of a saint somewhere at the back of his or her mind, whose aid is invoked whenever the uncertainties of life threaten". This finding has come from Prof. AN Dhar and Prof. Neerja Mattoo, co-editors of the book: Bhagavaan Gopinathji—Our Spiritual Heritage.

That the Government of India had no option but to recognize Lord Gopinath's spiritual stature as a saint became too evident to be missed when, not long ago, the Ministry of Communication issued a commemorative postal stamp on him. And by the time the important event had taken place in New Delhi, it had also been accepted that his fame had spread to countries abroad.

India got actively involved in the Bangladesh war of liberation in 1971. At a critical stage in war, a super power announced its involvement. One of its very powerful naval fleets was nearing the Bengal coast. People got panicky. The senior disciples and devotees at the Srinagar Ashram of Lord Gopinath were greatly worried.

Prof. JN Sharma quoted PN Kaul a 'senior' disciple, as saying that Lord Gopinath appeared before one of them in his astral form in response to their prayers and directed that a particular object should be offered jointly by them as an oblation at the Ashram before the evening prayer for four days. That was done and, just at the conclusion of the fourth day's homa (offering oblation), the news came over the radio that the enemy troops had surrendered.

Prof. Sharma has also let it be known that Lord Gopinath, after giving up the gross body, had been helping spiritual aspirants in, and outside, India. In 1986, Lord Gopinath made himself visible in his effulgent astral form before Raymond Gordon of Sydney.

Since then, he and Yonne Houley, another Australian devotee who had a vision of the Kashmiri saint, have been meditating on his 'pure light'.

Prof. Sharma has already put out his another finding: Among Lord Gopinath's disciples and devotees are many who never saw him during his lifetime. These include some in other countries Like Australia, the USA, Canada, Switzerland and the UK. That is why he has come to be called a Jagadguru, a world spiritual leader.

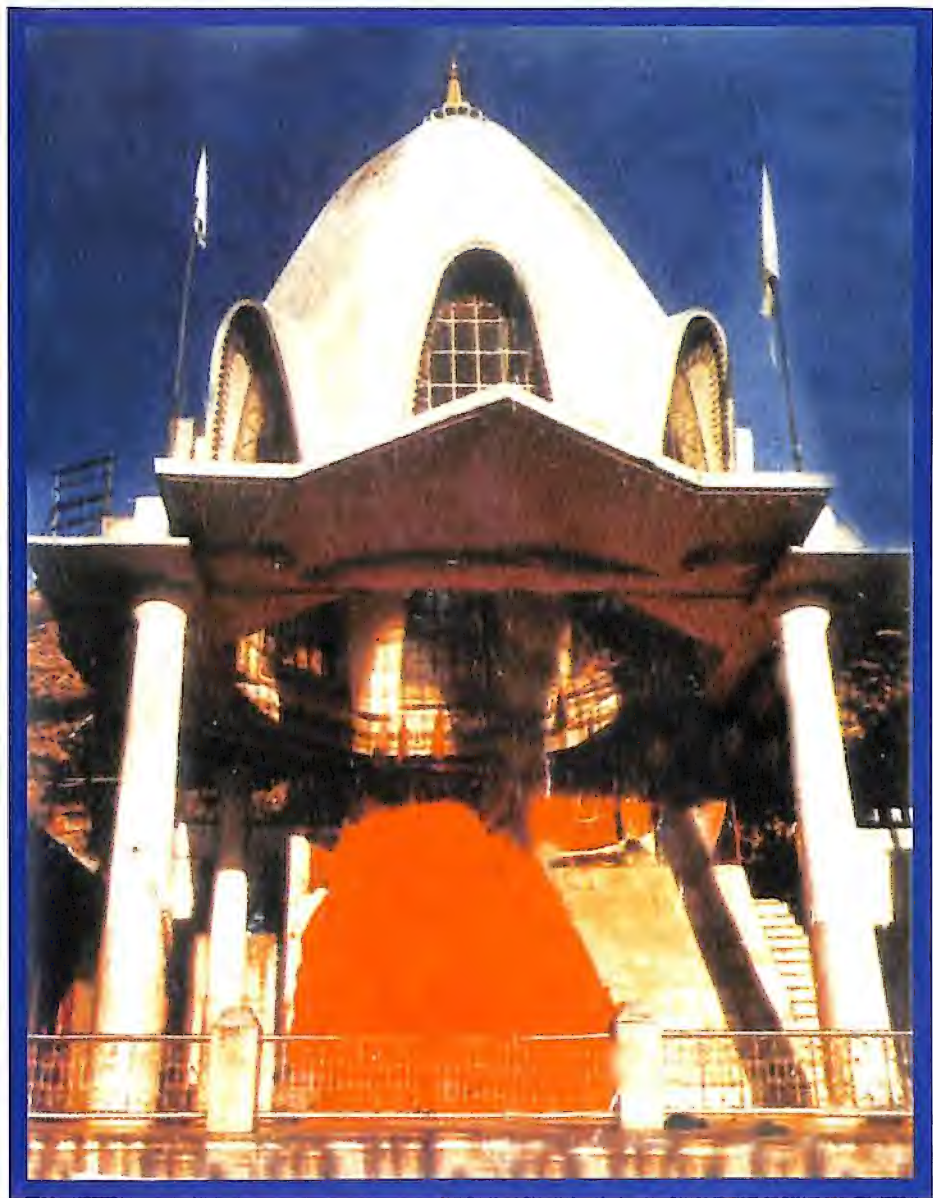
According to Prof. Sharma, Lord Gopinath once fasted for a month with specific purpose of extending by a year life-span of a man, whose children needed his attention.

Lord Gopinath may not have liked being called a 'Man of Miracles'. But he, in his capacity as a guide, sought to convey to people: If a man has reached lofty standards of action, perhaps through the evolution of many incarnations spent on earth, then miraculous powers will surely be his. They are part of his pure, divine nature.

The "*Shrimad Bhagvatta*" asks: "What power is beyond the reach of the sage who has controlled his mind, senses, nerve currents and disposition, and concentrates on God?". And in another place it says: "When a person is merged in God, all powers, all knowledge, all wisdom, all perfections, which are termed divine, shine forth from such a person."

And there is not denying the fact that Lord Gopinath had merged himself in God.





**Lord Gopinath visited Goddess Sharika
at Hari Parbat, Srinagar**

CHAPTER - IX

SOUL AND SOURCE

Mystic. Mystery. The former is concerned with direct communion of the soul with God, while the latter is revealed as religious truth, especially one beyond human intelligence. Lord Gopinath, the mystic of extremely high order, was all a mystery to majority of people. At the same time, however, he was clear in role as the sincere seeker: He did not create false images and gods.

“Keep the mind humble and appreciative”, was his message. Those with humble and appreciative mind do have a greater sense of awareness of the deeper values and essence in life to indulge in grief or self-pity is just as great a sin, if not greater than indulging in pleasures.

Lord Gopinath appeared completely transformed at the end of his seven-year stay in the house of Tika Lal at Rang Teng, in the interior of the city of Srinagar. Lord Gopinath was 39 when he completed his stay in this house. It was in this house that he renounced everything. The period from 1930 to 1937 was highly crucial for him. And as he plunged headlong into intense sadhana (spiritual discipline), nobody, barring his elder sister's daughter, was allowed to enter his room.

As his spiritual exercise intensified, he was found taking handfuls of stramonium seeds, opium, paanak and other intoxicants. He knew that the members of his family faced enormous financial difficulties, practically forcing his sister to be dejected and depressed. She, like others, grew restless when Lord Gopinath vomitted basinfuls of blood and his body got swollen during the seven-year period in the house of Tika Lal.

The mystic also emerged as the mystery-man. On the one hand, he would, during the 1930-1937 period, observe fast for months together. But he would, on the other hand, act in a manner

as to make others believe that he was 'abnormal'. Such a state of mind got exposed when he took huge quantities of food, sometimes though.

The seven-year rigorous spiritual discipline led to a new phenomenon: Lord Gopinath emerged as the 'Saint Extraordinary' with a full vision of the past, the present and the future.

By the time Lord Gopinath shifted to Chandpora house—his last residence on the earth—the Light had been bestowed on him, as he had established, beyond doubt, that he was the sincere seeker and that he had exhausted or surmounted his ties to pleasure. He also proved that the mystic is a true alchemist who turns the lower values in life, symbolized by lead and iron, into the pure gold of understanding the energy potential within them and the motive power behind these crystalised essences.

The mystic seeks out the causes and blocks or obstacles of his soul currents, and uses all his strength of will and soul qualities to right this central axis of his very being in relationship to the design and purpose of the Supreme Being. The mind of the mystic (Lord Gopinath) was ever in devotion and contemplation of the 'Source' and 'Origin' of all energy and beings. He did his work with his hands and feet, but his soul, heart and mind were in devotion to his God.

Mystery of consciousness? As "*Sant Sat Guru*" (Saint of Highest Order), Lord Gopinath instructed his sincere disciples to stand still in the Inner Essence by means of conscious devotion, and thus blend with the One Essence. One evening—that is, months after the Chinese attack on Ladakh in 1962—Lord Gopinath chose to be informal as he received his two disciples, SN Fotedar and Pran Nath Kaul. Both of them were taken aback when the "*Sant Sat Guru*" undertook the unusual exercise—that is, to hear and be heard.

Parenthetically, Lord Gopinath knew the pattern of anxiety of both Fotedar and Kaul. Hence, all the more reason for giving a

brief lesson on the occasion: When we become anxious, or attached to objects of sound or light, we are leaving the Inner Centre of the Essence where the Reality exists and are allowing the mind to go out after created things. The mind becomes self-conscious rather than absorbed in the Inner Essence of Oneness.

The cry of the mystic has to be for the Beloved; it should not be for the things of the mortal mind and consciousness. The true mystic seeker is a chrysalis in the process of becoming a beautiful butterfly in soul stature. At his Chandpora residence, after he had successfully accomplished his spiritual target during the seven-year sadhana at the Rang Teng house, Lord Gopinath left none in doubt that he had emerged as a giant in the process of becoming a 'Diamond Soul'.

The process and pressure, plus the heat which is necessary in order to form diamonds, emeralds and other jewels in the depth of the earth is similar to the process which souls go through in time and space of creation, to consciously bring forth the inner brilliance of the soul's radiance as the 'Diamond Soul.'

The mounting of the Diamond or jewel is symbolic of the creation of a body, a form, a Garden of Paradise, a place to set the jewel into the lotus flower or the lily of life. The Buddhist mystic has this in mind when he repeats his mantra 'Om Mani Padmi Hum' (Oh, the Jewel in the Lotus).

Lord Gopinath considered love as the 'soft and yielding' principle in nature. It is the neuter essence of all things, endures all things and is, above all, law because it is the Oneness which is unconditioned. It is in all creation, because all proceed from this Essence as a spark of the One Reality.

It is the brilliance in the diamond, the light in the Sun and Moon, the roar of the lion and the life in all there is, was or will be. Why was Lord Gopinath called 'Bub' (father) by his followers and devotees? Why did he go about as the man full of compassion?

Answer he offered: Without love we become hard shells, void of the inner spark of life and its radiance and die for want of this very substance. Love is the cup of life, as the heart of things material and spiritual.

In the world of economics, it was found that competition by various firms or individuals acted as tremendous stimuli toward creativeness in each line, and as a great push to the general progress and welfare of people of nations who used it. Could not this principle apply to all humanity as a new impetus to a better understanding of the spiritual life? Small sentences—sometimes just two or three words—from Lord Gopinath conveyed volumes. One such sentence: The joy and happiness is in the hunt.

His usage of the word 'hunt' was specifically meant to highlight the need for devotional duty and for hard effort in the field of spiritualism. One has to forget the self in the chase, in the search.

Lord Gopinath also established (1) his true mystic effort culminated in the Inner Path of Reality and Transport, (2) only he who seeks shall find, and to him who knocks shall the door of spiritual life open and lead to Eternity while yet in this body, (3) the Truth is one; so is the Way and the Life in all true mysticism, and (4) the true Guru or Guide will teach you how to direct the soul's own energy inward and upward to its centre of consciousness, to discover itself as that One Essence in Eternal Love and Grace, like a drop of water merging with the ocean.

In plain language, when the 'real' man himself becomes the object of his own search, then he is not led astray by external interests and discoveries or new theories. The full attention of his mind can then be drawn to a point of consciousness in the centre of his forehead, preparatory to the inner travel, upward, known as Transport or elevation of the consciousness.

By his word, his expression and his action Lord Gopinath did highlight—in fact, he emphasized—that one of the basic

requirements of spiritual life "is the control of sensory organs and the mind as they have a natural tendency to be drawn to the world of material objects". The objective of spiritual exercise is not suppression of the senses per se but directing them towards proper channels so that they become conducive to spiritual progress.

There is another subtlety in this. It can be seen for oneself that when one tries to forcefully suppress a desire, it raises its ugly head in some other form whereas when the same sensory pursuit is undertaken for the sake of God it becomes sublimated and in the course of time the tendency becomes weakened. This truth has been highlighted through the incarnation of the Divine Mother as Lalitha from the sacrificial fire to vanquish Pandasura.

This demon was causing trouble to the celestials and they beseeched the creator, Brahma, to intervene. Who was this Asura? It is important to appreciate the symbolism of these episodes in the Puranas. The battle between the good (Deva) and the evil (Asura) forces is an allegory for the constant turmoil within the human mind between the urge for sensory gratification and the innate spiritual nature. Pandasura sprang from the ashes to which Manmatha was reduced when he tried to disrupt Lord Shiva's penance.

Lord Gopinath did not condemn worldly engagement for the one who was desirous of liberation but highlighted in his spoken words how such pursuits can be transmuted into spiritual exercise. On one occasion he used the analogy of a cowherd reaping milk in bounty by keeping his flock under control to underscore that a devotee who likewise keeps senses in check will be blessed with spiritual experience

Lord Gopinath thus welcomed human birth as an opportunity to realise God. Among the countless living beings, he taught us, only man *"is blessed with the capacity of actualizing his spiritual nature"*.

Jagat Guru Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji
Charitable, Cultural and Research Foundation (Regd.)
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The Foundation aims to work for the cause of The Kashmiri Pandit community in particular and all of humanity in general. After displacement, it has become necessary for the community to sit together, to keep our culture intact and reflect on our *Dharma*.

The revered Ashram at Kharyar (Srinagar Kashmir) was an excellent place as most of us were concentrated at one location. Today, we have spread all over the country and no longer live in close contact. Accordingly, all of us deserve peace, togetherness and the opportunity to work in harmony.

The Foundation is engaged in spiritual, cultural upliftment and philanthropic activities. It conducts research into His teachings for preserving them for posterity. We promote charitable activities (helping needy sections including the handicapped and destitute, providing medical treatment to many needy persons, etc.). In the future, the Foundation intends to set up a polyclinic.

In light of this, the Foundation endeavours to reinforce Babji's principles. The very core of our work and beliefs as *Bhakts* of Bhagavaan Ji is to bring further glory and peace to His *parivaar*.

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Lord Gopinath

Brevity is Beauty

B. L. KAK